THURSDAY
April 25, 2024

BENGALURU
CITY EDITION
18 Pages ₹ 6.00

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POBITORA CASE

No wildlife will be left if conflicts continue: SC

NEWS » PAGE 10

CAMPAIGNING ENDS

Second phase poll tomorrow

NEWS » PAGE 11

AGONY ZONE

Israel pummels Gaza with air strikes again

WORLD » PAGE 14

SHIPPING INDUSTRY

Indian seafarers deserve better in choppy waters

Recent events threaten their welfare, security

EDITORIAL » PAGE 8

HAVING THE LAST LAUGH

Capitals pip Titans in thrilling contest

SPORT » PAGE 15

Cong. plan for equality is a 'dangerous game': Modi

PM says Opposition party aims at snatching rights and properties; it has plans to implement a 15% reservation on the basis of religion by reducing quota of SCs, STs & OBCs, he alleges in three rallies

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI/RAIPUR

Doubling down on his attacks against the Congress's promises on social justice and alleged wealth redistribution, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday alleged that the "dangerous intentions" of the Congress were coming to the fore one by one.

Addressing poll rallies in Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh, Mr. Modi reiterated his assertion that the Congress's plan for social welfare and reducing inequality amounted to a "dangerous game" of wealth redistribution and "snatching people's rights and properties".

"This is Congress *ki* loot. *Zindagi ke saath bhi, zindagi ke baad bhi* (During life, and after life also)," he said. "While you are alive, they want to survey your personal wealth, property, houses, shops, and land, and give it away to secure their vote bank. And when you die, they want to deprive you of the right to leave your assets behind to future generations as well."

At all three rallies he addressed on Wednesday, Mr. Modi said the Congress had planned to implement a 15% reservation on the basis of religion by reducing the existing quota for Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs) and other backward classes (OBCs).

The Congress manifesto for the 2024 Lok Sabha election does not contain any mention of a religion-based reservation or of reducing the quota for SCs, STs, or OBCs. In fact, the Congress manifesto calls for a Constitutional amendment to raise the quota limit beyond 50%.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 10

Frenzied pace: Prime Minister Narendra Modi greeting supporters during a roadshow in Bhopal on Wednesday. A.M. FARUQUI

Congress wants quota in armed forces: Rajnath

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has accused the Congress of wanting to divide "every institution" on the basis of religion. Its manifesto hinted at bringing in religion-based quota that could extend to the armed forces, he said. » PAGE 10

Bengal moves SC against dismissal of school staff

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The West Bengal government on Wednesday approached the Supreme Court against a Calcutta High Court order terminating the appointment of nearly 24,000 teaching and non-teaching staff in State-run and aided schools across the State in the jobs-for-cash case.

The State said the High Court acted in an erroneous manner by mechanically cancelling all the appointments without looking into individual cases. The sudden termination of staff at the start of the new academic year will hit students, the State said.

FULL REPORT » PAGE 10

RBI tells Kotak Bank not to onboard new customers online

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday directed Kotak Mahindra Bank Ltd. (Kotak Bank) to cease and desist, with immediate effect, from onboarding new customers through its online and mobile banking channels and issuing fresh credit cards.

Kotak Bank is however allowed to continue to provide services to its existing customers, including its credit card customers.

"These actions are necessitated based on significant concerns arising out of Reserve Bank's IT examination of the bank for 2022 and 2023 and the continued failure on the part of the bank to address these concerns in a timely manner," the central bank said in its directive.

Kotak Bank cannot issue fresh credit cards. REUTERS

"Serious deficiencies and non-compliances were observed in the areas of IT inventory management... data security, business continuity and disaster recovery rigour and drill, etc.," it said.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 10

Petition in SC seeks probe into poll bond 'corruption'

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

A petition was filed in the Supreme Court on Wednesday for constituting a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to investigate each instance of *quid pro quo*, corruption, and kickbacks that had been revealed through the disclosure of details on electoral bonds.

The petition, filed by Common Cause and the Centre for Public Interest Litigation, said some of the country's main investigative agencies, including the CBI, the Enforcement Directorate, and the Income Tax Department "appear to have become accessories to corruption".

FULL REPORT » PAGE 10

NEARBY

EC to ensure increased voter turnout

BENGALURU

With campaigning in the 14 constituencies that go to polls on Friday ending on Wednesday, the Election Commission has made elaborate arrangements for the smooth conduct of polls. Manoj Kumar Meena, CEO for Karnataka, said all measures are being taken to increase the voter turnout. » Page 4

EVMs' control units do not recognise parties or names: SC

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday called the microcontrollers separately programmed by manufacturers in electronic voting machines (EVMs) "agnostic", for they do not recognise political parties or candidates but only the buttons pressed by voters.

"Microcontrollers in the control units [of EVMs] are agnostic. They do not recognise party or candidate names. What they recognise are the buttons pressed on the ballot units," Justice Sanjiv Khanna, heading a two-judge Bench, observed.

Polling officials checking EVMs in Mumbai on Wednesday. PTI

Justice Khanna said the buttons on the ballot units were interchangeable. "A party which got button 1 in a constituency would get button 6 in another constituency. The programming of the units are done at the manufacturer stage. Manufacturer would not know which party would get what button," Justice Khanna surmised.

The case dealt with petitions claiming that the EVM system was opaque and prone to rigging.

The court emphatically said EVM source code should not be disclosed as it would be prone to misuse. "It will become a problem... Disclosure will expose it to misuse. Integrity will suffer," Justice Khanna said.

CONTINUED ON » PAGE 10

Modi Government
Last 10 years
Miniscule mobile manufacturing to the world's second largest mobile manufacturer
From Fragile 5 to the world's top-5 economic power
4+ crore pucca houses made
10+ crore housewives were given LPG cylinders
2.8+ crore families were given free electricity connection
Mangalyaan, Chandrayaan and Aditya L-1 mission proved Bharat's strength
Indian Railways became world class with 100+ cities connected through Vande Bharat trains
Introduced free treatment scheme up to ₹5 lakhs for 50+ crore citizens
Next 5 years
Will make Bharat a global hub of manufacturing
Will make Bharat the third largest economy in the world
3+ crore more pucca houses will be made
Will deliver affordable cooking gas through pipelines to every home
PM Surya Ghar Yojana will bring electricity bill to zero
Will create a new benchmark in space technology with the success of Gaganyaan
Will introduce bullet train
Will provide free health services to all senior citizens above 70 years of age by including them in Ayushman Bharat Yojana
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Press the lotus button
Make BJP win
No. F.1/CEO/MCMC/2024/860
Published by: Bharatiya Janata Party, 6-A, Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Marg, New Delhi

‘PC defence India’s biggest concern’

Former goalkeeper Adrian feels new players need to step up to shoulder the responsibility; Rupinder hopes the lessons learnt in Australia will help the side in Paris

GETTY IMAGES

K. Keerthivasan
CHENNAI

Former Indian goalkeeper Adrian D’Souza watches intently as a young goalkeeper takes a sprint from the place where a custodian takes guard to the area where the penalty corner specialist takes his or her shot.

On the other side of the artificial turf at the SDAT-Mayor Radhakrishnan Stadium here in Chennai, former India defender, a penalty corner specialist, and a key member of the team that won the bronze medal in the 2021 Tokyo Olympics, is busy taking a video of a player unleashing a drag flick. Then, he gets busy talking to the young players on the nuances of drag flicks. For over an hour, the two Olympians, Rupinderpal Singh (2021 Tokyo) and Adrian (2004 Athens) get occupied, discussing with the young players, all aged under-19 years, the technique and strategy involved in taking penalty corners and the art of goalkeeping respectively.

Novel initiative

“It is a unique and novel initiative by Hockey India. A coaching camp like this has not happened before,” gushed Adrian even as Rupinderpal said: “We want the players to have the right technique and we are eager to groom players who show bright potential.”

Of course, things have been not so bright for the Indian men’s team especially with Paris Olympics nearing. In a disastrous outing in Australia, India lost all the five Test matches in Perth. The team’s performance reflected the Murphy’s law, “Whatever has gone wrong will go wrong.”

Rupinderpal and Adrian weren’t unduly worried about the team’s drubbing in Australia. Rather, they felt it will force the team into a huddle and the players will come up with a better performance in the forthcoming FIH Pro League in Europe and the Paris Olympics.

Rupinderpal is of the firm opinion that the team has to focus more on penalty corner defence and score more field goals. The 33-year-old, with 223 International caps, explained the lessons learnt in the failed Test series against Australia.

“Test games are always taken as preparation before the bigger tournaments. So, I think I’m sure they have taken those games in that mentality only. But, of course in those Test games, they have tried many things including trying various combinations. They were new faces as well. I think the head coach (Craig Fulton) has given opportunity to new faces, too. In that way, I think it is a plus point that they have got five games against Australia before the Pro-League and the Olympics. And I think they just need to improve on defensive structure, especially penalty corner defence because they have conceded around seven goals during penalty corner defence; it‘s an area they need to improve. At the same time, they need to work on scoring some field goals as well.”

Having played Test matches in Perth in his time with the Indian team, Adrian said Indians have done badly in Perth. Especially when he was with the Indian team twice, the team fared quite badly.

According to the former India custodian, with 165 International caps, the biggest challenge for the Indian men’s team has been Perth. “More than Brisbane, Melbourne and Sydney, I think Perth has been a destination where as an Indian squad we’ve always had a tough time. There’s no specific reason. In my experience, Perth would always be a place where we would have a tough time. I think twice we went there during my time as a player. We lost the series 3-0 and 4-0 in 2007-08 & the next time was in 2010.”

Find new rushers

Adrian is clear that the team has to improve its penalty corner defence, which is an area of concern. He insisted India that has to find new rushers other than the usual ones such as Manpreet Singh and Amit Rohidas.

“We had the best first rushers like Manpreet Singh and the other guys out there giving their life out. And for attack, it’s always been Harmanpreet Singh and now we have Jugraj Singh and many others. And, of course, defender Amit Rohidas; he’s the wall, who is like a goalkeeper running out there. But we cannot always depend only on Amit and Manpreet. We have to find others. And that’s what this entire series has been about. There were many other players who got the opportunity to represent India against Australia in a Test series.”

Neither refusing to single out any player who did well nor willing to pick any player for defeat in the Test series against Australia, Rupinderpal said hockey has always been about team effort and camaraderie. He said if these two aspects are there in a team, any struggle can be overcome. ...”I don’t believe in individual performances. Of course, it counts. But at the same time, if the team’s coordination and team’s environment is good, then any struggle on the field can be managed.”

Adrian said the positive aspect in the run-up to Paris Olympics was that the team has enough time to prepare unlike what happened in Tokyo. He said: “For me, the biggest challenge is that the players shouldn’t get demotivated. Because we have less than 90 days for Paris. We have to learn lessons from Perth. Unlike the last time in the Tokyo Olympics, there were not many practice matches that the team could play due to COVID. But now the team is getting more exposure. I think the entire management must have surely learnt a lot. And figured out the best team for Paris because it is going to be a very tough one.”

Moreover, Adrian said India has failed to control Australia in the latter’s counter-attacks. “Personally, I feel there are more challenging parts. Especially with penalty corner defence. And when it comes to Australia, it’s the counter-attacks that we have to be very, very cautious about. That was one of the weaker aspects. Definitely, Australia can convert a defensive opportunity. The Australian team will be defending and in the next 15 seconds, they will score a goal. So, the challenging part is how you break them as Australia doesn’t like to be broken. And they don’t like to have more fouls on them. And that was a great lesson to be learnt in the recent Test series.”

Adrian said in Paris Olympics, chances of getting penalty corners isn’t easy and the Indian team should be able to convert the few chances it gets. “When you are going to go to an Olympics, you surely are going to only be prepared for two or three penalty corners per game, but you have to convert. Conversion rates have to be 100 per cent or at least 80 per cent. And not 50 per cent, which will not help you much.”

Rupinderpal felt India has been doing well in penalty corners with Harmanpreet and Jugraj doing well and he believed that they should focus on it and fine-tune it.

Mastering it

Adrian said the Indian team has mastered the 2 vs 1 (return passes) where the two attackers don’t hold the ball or dribble for long. Rather they pass quickly to the other giving no chance to the defender. “The best part what I have been observing in Indian hockey recently is the combination. The one-to-one passes that we have been doing. It reminds you of Dhanraj Pillay and Mukesh Kumar. You might change the colour of the turf, you might change the colour of the ball, but there are certain things you can’t change. A ‘2v1’ will always beat the opponent. But the way you do it and where you do it is so important. Right now, India has been doing it at the right places.”

Rupinderpal and Adrian said a medal for India at Paris is not ruled out but as is the cliche it has to take one match at time. Adrian weighed in: “It depends on how consistent the team is on a given day. Because consistency plays a big role in the big events. You can have a great match versus Australia. Maybe, we’ll win Australia. But what if you lose the other games? What if you lose to Ireland? And that is the key for Indians, especially mentally. I think the Indian team has the right set of coaching staff. But at the end, what matters is how they work as a team. Because what you witnessed in the Tokyo Olympics is a complete team effort. Everybody chipped.”

The two Olympians strongly believe that team work will be the key for the Indian team. Explained Adrian: “If you have 11 players on the field, even if eight players are giving their 100 per cent those three (non-performing) will be hidden. But if you have 11 players on the field and eight are not performing, then even those three who are performing will come in that loop.”

THE GIST

- Rupinderpal said the 0-5 whitewash in the recently concluded Test series against Australia wasn't a true reflection of how the Indian men's team can perform at the Paris Olympics
- Adrian said India has to be cautious about Australia's counter-attack as it has the ability to convert a defensive opportunity into a goalscoring opportunity in 15 seconds
- Rupinderpal and Adrian, who are in Chennai for a week-long coaching camp organised by Hockey India, said it was a novel idea by HI. They feel the camp will help identity and groom promising young talents
- The two Olympians are of the view that India can win a medal at Paris provided they are consistent and play together as a unit

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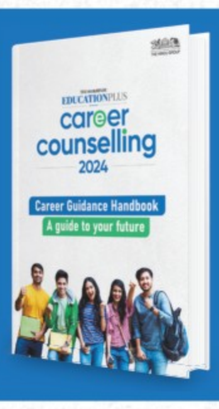

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1.49 lakh students register for II PU annual exam-2

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The annual exam-2 for II PU students will be held from April 29 at 301 centres across the State and as many as 1,49,300 students have registered for it.

Among those registered, 84,933 are boys and 64,367 are girls. As many as 32,848 students have applied to improve their marks from the annual exam-1. A total of 27,092 repeaters, 139 private candidates, and 89,221 students who did not clear the exam-1 have registered for the exam-2. Department-wise, 52,492 candidates from the Arts stream, 39,427 from Commerce, and 57,381 from the Science stream will write the exam.

The exam will be held from April 29 at 301 centres across the State

The Karnataka School Examination and Assessment Board has instructed all the students who have registered for the exam to download the admit card by entering their registration number on the board's website – www.kseab.karnataka.gov.in. Students who do not have an 11-digit registration number can contact the principal of their college to get the admit card.

The KSEAB has postponed the Home Science subject exam from May 4 to May 9. It will be conducted from 10.15 a.m. to 1.30 a.m.

A crowd-puller

The annual Karaga procession was taken out from the Sri Dharmarayana Swamy Temple in Bengaluru in the early hours of Wednesday. PTI

Seven students arrested for abducting, robbing collegemates

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Yelahanka New Town police on Wednesday arrested a group of seven students of a private college for allegedly abducting, torturing, and robbing ₹50,000 from two of their collegemates as they wanted to take revenge over a clash that broke out between two groups of students a few days ago.

Based on a complaint, the police arrested Vivek, Anamitra, Yuvaraj Rathod, Arijrojith, Prajeeth, Allen, and Karan, charging them with dacoity. According to the police, the accused confronted Krishna Bajpai and Yuvraj Singh near a resort when they were looking for a house to rent in the area. The accused forcibly took the accused to their house, assaulted them with iron rods, tortured them with burning cigarettes before forcing the duo to transfer ₹50,000 online to their accounts, said the police. The accused released the duo and asked them to pay ₹4 lakh more and threatened them of dire consequences if they failed to do so.

The duo returned home and got admitted to a hospital before alerting the police. Based on the complaint, the police arrested the accused.

Clash

An initial probe revealed that there was a clash between two groups of students where Anamitra sustained injuries. The accused noticed the victims, who were reportedly part of the opposite group, moving into the area looking for a house for rent and decided to teach them a lesson.

Price of beans crosses ₹200 mark in city

'Supply to market has reduced by almost 70% as heat has destroyed the crop; the price may go up further next month as supply will not pick up until a good spell of rain'

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

It is now the turn of beans to burn a hole in the pockets of consumers. The vegetable is being sold for anything between ₹180 and ₹220 a kg in retail and online markets in Bengaluru. The supply to markets has taken a hit as heat has destroyed the beans crop in Kolar district and other vegetable growing regions around Bengaluru.

Beans crop has perished in Kolar district and other vegetable growing regions around Bengaluru. BHAGYA PRAKASH K.

While beans get expensive every summer, this is one of the highest it has ever touched, according to traders. In wholesale markets, the selling price is around ₹120 to ₹130 a kg.

"The supply to the market has reduced by almost 70% this year. In the last 10 days, the price went from ₹80 a kg to ₹120," said Manjunath Reddy, a vegetable trader in K.R. Market.

"We get good quality beans in the market only when the temperature is hovering around 30° Celsius. Otherwise, the quality deteriorates." He added that the price might go up by another ₹10 to ₹20 in the next month as supply will not pick up until a good spell of rain.

Dip in yield

Farmers reported that the yield has reduced to a mere 30-40%.

"While the yield on one acre is usually around 1,500 kg, now farmers are struggling to get even 500 kg," said Nalini Gowda, president, Karnataka Rajya Raitha Sangha, Kolar district. "The temperature is very high, and flowers are dropping from the plant. The climber develops well only when there is cooler air and cooler water. But due to heat and power problems, we are not able to provide plants with cool water, and stored water usually heats up very quickly." She said rain is the only solution to improve the yield, and thereby lead to a reduction in price of beans.

Other vegetables

Apart from beans, the price of other vegetables also continues to be high in the city. At Hopcoms, brinjal is being sold at ₹42 to ₹66 a kg, lady's finger at ₹58, carrot at ₹46, and cabbage at ₹42 a kg.

Price of toor dal up

Along with vegetables, the price of toor dal has also been going up consistently since December in the city. It is currently selling at ₹150 to ₹170 a kg in wholesale while the price has breached the ₹200 a kg mark in retail outlets.

"In Karnataka, the crop is down by 50% this time due to drought. The remaining stock is coming in from other States and hence the price has been going up. Now with the festive season, it reached one of its highest prices and it is expected to climb to the range of ₹160 - ₹180 a kg in the upcoming weeks," said Ramesh Chandra Lahoti, president of the Federation of Karnataka Chambers of Commerce and Industry.

Fire at timber stockyard at Singasandra

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

A timber yard situated at Singasandra in Electronics City, a car wash facility, and a ready-made garments shop were gutted in an accidental fire that broke out on Tuesday evening.

Fire was noticed at the timber yard and it soon spread to the car wash facility situated adjacent to it. Six fire tenders rushed to the spot and after many hours of struggle, Fire and Emergency Services personnel managed to contain the blaze on Wednesday morning.

Two cars and several bikes along with goods and ready-made garments estimated to be around ₹5 crore were destroyed in the fire. However, no casualties were reported, officials of the Fire and Emergency Services said.

The rescue team used aerial ladders to put out the fire in the garment factory situated on the fourth floor of the building.

Thick smoke engulfed the area and created panic among the residents for some time.

The Fire Services officials along with the police are probing further to ascertain the cause of the blaze.

Pre-activated SIM card smuggling racket unearthed

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Alert staff of an international courier firm foiled an attempt to smuggle pre-activated SIM cards to foreign countries through Bengaluru airport from neighbouring States.

Based on complaints, the Airport police initiated an investigation to track down two persons who attempted to smuggle the SIM cards, suspected to be used for illegal activities online.

In the first case, the complainant, Ashik Sony, working for a courier firm, found pants with a parcel concealing 24 SIM cards. The parcel was booked in the name of Srinivasa Rao from Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh, and was destined for Taiwan.

Similarly, another parcel concealing 114 SIM cards booked in the name of Syed from Chennai was booked for Cambodia. The Airport police have registered a case under the Telecommunications Act.

Earlier cases

In March this year, the Delhi police arrested four persons for allegedly sending hundreds of international SIM cards every month to Vietnam. The police recovered 500 SIM cards found in three packages covered in carbon paper and kept inside a diary in a hollow space made by cutting the pages.

Similarly, the Surat police in Gujarat have detained two men and seized 192 pre-activated SIM cards which were being illegally sent to Dubai.

OBITUARY & REMEMBRANCE

DEATH

N. DORAISWAMI (82), Retired Stores Department, The Hindu, Chennai passed away on 24-04-2024. Address: Plot No: 15, Sri Balaji Avenue III Phase, Chozhan Street, Neelamangalam, Guduvanchery-603202. Contact: 9941969111

PUBLIC NOTICE

General Public is hereby given notice that **Mr. D. Amarnath Son of N. Dwarakanath,** is the owner of schedule property. the said owner had purchaser the above Property by Deed of Sale dated 24.05.2013, registered as document BNS-1-01992/2013-14, stored in CD No.BNSD-276, registered before the office of the Sub Registrar, Shivajinagar (Banasawadi) from the previous owner **1) Mrs. M. Nirmala** W/o. late Deenadayalu, alongwith her minor children **2) Master Hemanth Dayalu** 3) **Kum. Manasa Dayalu** (Both are minors represented by their mother and natural guardian **Mrs. M. Nirmala**). Now any person(s) having any claim in respect of the above Schedule property or part thereof by way of charge, gift, inheritance, minor claims, possession or beneficial interest under any trust right of prescription or pre-emption or under any Agreement or other disposition or under any decree, order or Award or otherwise claiming, howsoever, are hereby requested to make the CLAIM known in writing together with supporting documents to the undersigned at the office of Ashvik Law Associates, Advocates and Solicitors, within a period of **7 days** of the publication hereof failing which the claim of such person(s) will deemed to have been waived and/or abandoned. Unfortunately, during the house shifting, the approved construction Plan document has be lost and the same is not traceable. If anybody is in possession of the Original Document relating to the schedule property, they are hereby requested to hand over the same to the below Address.

SCHEDULE PROPERTY

ALL THAT PIECE AND PARCEL OF the Residential Property bearing **Site No.11,** Khatha No.735/11, New Bruhat Bangalore Mahanagara Palike Form- B Property Registry Extract Khata Sl.No.1537, Property No. 735/89/1/11 (Old Katha No. 735/11), measuring East to West 40 feet., and North to South 30 feet., in all measuring **1200 Square Feet,** Situated at **Thanisandra Village, Krishnarajapuram Hobli, Bangalore East Taluk, Bangalore,** and bounded on:

East by : Sri Ramegowda Property;
West by : Road;
North by : Site No.12; and,
South by : Site No.10.

Ashvik Law Associates,
Office at No 24, First Floor,
Sri Rama Mandir Road, Near to Lalbagh
Metro Station, Basavanagudi, Bangalore-560004.
Office: 080 4097 1312

IN THE COURT OF THE XXIV ADDL. CITY CIVIL JUDGE, AT BENGALURU (CCH-6)
P & SC. No. 701/2023

BETWEEN: 1. Mrs. Sulochana Shenoy, W/o. Late Mr. Laxmana Shenoy, aged about 76 years, **2. Mr. Vinayak Shenoy .K,** S/o. Late Mr. Laxmana Shenoy, aged about 44 years, Both residing at No.22/23, Amma Vaishnavi Layout Main Road, Vidyaranyapura, Bengaluru- 560 097 Both presently residing at No.90, "ISHWARA KRUPA", Raghavendra Colony, 5th Main, Vidyaranyapura, Bengaluru- 560 097 ... **PETITIONERS** -V/s-
RESPONDENTS: ... NIL

PUBLIC NOTICE

Whereas, the Petitioners i.e. 1st is the wife and 2nd is the son of deceased Mr. Laxmana Shenoy K, have instituted the above said petition Under Section 372 of the Indian Succession Act 1925, praying the Hon'ble Court to Pass an Order to grant a Succession Certificate in respect of petition schedule moveable property of the deceased Mr. Laxmana Shenoy K, who expired on 20-08-2021, to have effect throughout the State of Karnataka, in favour of the Petitioners & to grant any other reliefs which this Hon'ble Court deems fit under the circumstances of this case, in the interest of justice & equity The above suit has been posted to **12-06-2024** at 11:00 A.M

Take notice, that in case anybody has any objections for the Grant of Succession Certificate, he/she can file objections with the same on or before **12-06-2024**, failing which the petition shall be decided in accordance to law.

Sl.No.	Bank Name	Branch	A/c	Locker No.
1.	Bank of Baroda	Mangaluru Hampankatta	05250100016259 INR0525	0525BX0140

Given under my hand and the seal of the court on 18-04-2024.
By order of the court, Senior Sheristedar City Civil Court, Bangalore.
Advocate for Petitioners: **Mrs. RASHMA RAGHAVAN .K & Mrs. RESHMA KHANAM,** No.759, Padmaraag, 8th Cross, 8th Main, 4th Block, BEL Layout, Vidyaranyapura, Bangalore-5600097.

SOUTHERN RAILWAY
Chennai Division, Mechanical Branch
IREPS NIT No. MAS/MECH/LRD/EPOXY/2024 Dt. 20.04.2024

Divisional Railway Manager/Mechanical Branch/Chennai Division, Chennai-600 003 for and on behalf of the President of India invites ONLINE tenders for the following work as per tender notice given in the IREPS Portal **http://www.ireps.gov.in.** The Tenderer(s) /contractor(s) intending to apply for e- tender for Mechanical works in Chennai division, need to get enrolled in the IREPS portal **http://www.ireps.gov.in** and only online tenders will be accepted.

Description	Luggage Rack Dismantling, Powder coating and refixing to the coach and Supply & Application of Epoxy flooring in the toilets of the coaches at BBQ Depot.
Location	**BBQ/ MAS DIVISION**
Advertised tender value	Rs.46,30,108.00
Earnest Money Deposit	Rs.92,700.00
Similar nature of work	Applicable
Period of completion in Months	12months
Tender closing date and time	14.05.2024 @ 15.00 Hrs.

Details of tender are given in e-portal **http://www.ireps.gov.in** for details bid submission please refer to web portal **http://www.irept.gov.in.**

Sr.Divisional Mechanical Engineer/ Chennai

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PERSONAL
CHANGE OF NAME

I, ANTHONY Benny, S/o Benny, R/at Flat No.315, Tallam Shudha Residency, 14th A Main, 60 ft. Ring Road, Behind Alliance Academy College, BTM 2nd Stage, Bangalore-560076, have changed my name from Anthony Benny to Benny Anthony Dass vide affidavit dated 24/04/2024 before Notary K.V.Mani, Bengaluru.

PERSONAL
CHANGE OF NAME

I, RUKSAR Khana, W/o Khadeer Ahmed, R/at No.24, Ground Floor, 2nd Cross, 24th Main, 100 ft. Intermediate Ring Road, V G S Layout, Ejipura, Bangalore-560047, have changed my name from Ruksar Khana to Ruksar Fathima vide affidavit dated 24/04/2024 before Notary K.V.Mani, Bengaluru.

EDUCATIONAL
GENERAL

ANTHRO
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D Ananya Reddy AIR 3

Abhinav Jain AIR 35

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Online(Live) & Offline
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PERSONAL
CHANGE OF NAME

I, ARVIND Kumar Vanitha Kumari, R/a No.13/1, K V Temple Street, Sourastrapet, Bengaluru-560053 have changed my name to Vanitha Kumari vide affidavit dt: 23.04.2024 sworn before Notary G.Mallikarjunappa, B'luru

AFFIDAVIT

I, **PRINCE FRANCIS JACOB** S/o. Sri E.P. Jacob, aged about 61 years, residing at 1A Haydon Manor, No-12, Eagle Street Near Aggarwal Eye Clinic, Langford Town, Bangalore-560025, do hereby declared that both the names **PRINCE FRANCIS JACOB & PRINCE JACOB ELUVATHINGAL** are one and the same and they are relating to my name and not relating to different persons, vide affidavit dated 27.11.2023, sworn to before A Idinabba, Notary, Govt. of Karnataka, Bengaluru.

LEGAL NOTICE

IN THE COURT OF THE CITY CIVIL JUDGE AT BENGALURU (CCH No: 28)
Arbitration Suit No. 5 of 2011

Between: 1. Sri. Ajesh Kumar Singh, Aged about 39 years, S/o. Sri. Anoop Singh Verma.
2. Sri. Anoop Singh Verma, Aged about 76 years, S/o.Sri.Hukum chand,
Both are residents of Rishabh Vihar, Circular Road, Muzzafarnagar, Uttar Pradesh. **...Plaintiffs**
And: 1. M/s.A.B.S. India (P) Limited, Formerly known as M/s. Alcatel Business Systems India Limited), # 49, 100 feet Road, Koramangala 4th Block, Bangalore - 560034.
Rep by its Managing Director and another

SUMMONS TO DEFENDANT No. 2 UNDER ORDER V RULE 20 (1A) OF CIVIL PROCEDURE CODE.

2. Sri. A. Mohan Ram, Retired District & Sessions Judge, # 2339, HAL III Stage, BDA Layout, Vimanapura Post, Bangalore -560017
Also at: **Sri.A.Mohan Ram,** Retired District & Sessions Judge, No.29, 1st Floor, Park Road, Tasker Town, Near Ghosha Hospital, Near Indian Express Circle, Bengaluru-560 051. **...Defendants**

WHEREAS, the Plaintiff has instituted the above suit against the Defendants for quashing / setting aside the Award dated: 3-11-2010 passed by the Arbitrator/ Defendant No.2 and consequently reject the claim petition filed by the Defendant No.1 against the Plaintiffs. You, the Defendant No.2 is hereby summoned to appear in this court in person or by a pleader duly instructed and able to answer all material questions on the **28th** day of **June 2024** at **11.00** in the forenoon.

Take notice that in default of your appearance on the day before mentioned the Petition will be proceeded with and determined in your absence.

Given under my hand and seal on this the 22nd day of April 2024.

By Order of the Court, Assistant Registrar, City Civil Court, Bengaluru.
Advocate for Plaintiff:
Sri. Ganesh Bhat Y.H., Advocate, #22, I Floor, Yamunabai Road, Madhavanagar, Bengaluru-560 001.

PERSONAL
ANNOUNCEMENTS

I, S. Glory is legally wedded wife of No. JC197006-X, Rank: NAIB/SUBEDAR, Name Christudass S, residing at No.236, Kalappa Layout, 6th Cross, 4th Block, Doddabommasandra, Vidyaranyapura Post, Bengaluru-560097 have changed my date of birth from 14/02/1965 to 14/09/1965 vide affidavit dated: 24/04/2024 before Notary L.Gopalakrishna, B'lore

LEGAL NOTICE

IN THE COURT OF THE LXXIII ADDL. CITY CIVIL & SESSIONS JUDGE AT BANGALORE (CCH-74)
O.S. No. 25778/2023
Hg. 06/06/2024

BETWEEN
ICICI Bank Limited
having its Registered Office at ICICI Tower, Near Chakli Cirle, Old Padra Road, Vadodara-390 007 And its branch office at Mythri Center, # 4/10, Hosur Road, Bommanahalli, Bangalore - 560 068 **...Plaintiff**
AND
Nagaraj M.B. **...Defendant**

SUMMONS TO DEFENDANT

To,
Nagaraj M.B.
Aged about 48 years,
S/o. Balu R/a: 147/2,
3rd Cross, 13th Main,
Gokul New Extension,
Mathikere Post,
Mathikere, Bangalore-560054

Whereas the Plaintiff has instituted the above proceedings against you seeking recovery of **Rs.4,78,446/-** (as on 09/03/2023) along with interest at 24% p.a. and other consequential reliefs. You are hereby summoned to appear before the LXXIII Addl. City Civil & Sessions Judge, Mayo Hall Unit, Bangalore [CCH 74] in person or by a pleader duly instructed and able to answer all material questions relating to the above proceedings the **06/06/2024** at **11:00 A.M** take notice that in default of your appearance on the day mentioned before, the suit will be heard and determined in your absence.

Given under my hard and the seal of this court, this the 18th day of June, 2024

Deputy Registrar
City Civil Court
Mayo Hall Unit
Bengaluru

Advocate for Plaintiff
Shiva & Co. Advocates,
No.109 Commerce House,
9/1, Cummingham Road,
Bangalore- 560052

PUBLIC NOTICE

This notice is issued on behalf of My client **Mr.Rafiq Ahmed S/o S.Abdul Hafeez** to bring the notice of the general public that registered original absolute sale deed bearing doc No.2542/1978-79 of Book-1, Volum No.286, in Page No.112, Date.12.09.1978, registered in the office of the sub-registrar, Rajajinagar Bangalore, executed by the Mysore Government Employees House Building Co-Operative Society Ltd., in favour of **Sri.B.Thimmaiah** is missing / lost/ misplaced in respect of schedule property.

If any person/s, firm, company, institution or organization has any claim are holding the afore mentioned document or schedule property, they may contact the undersigned in writing within **7 days** from the date of this notice failing which it will be presumed that there are no claims.

SCHEDULE PROPERTY

All the piece and parcel of the residential immovable property bearing site **No.195,** formed by the Mysore Government Employees House Building Co-Operative Society Ltd., situated at **Devasandra Village, Kasaba Hobli, Bangalore North Taluk,** Division No.1, presently comes under the Limits of BBMP, Bangalore, measuring East to West 53+52/2 feet and North to South 30 feet, total measuring **1575 Sq.ft.,** and bounded on:

East by : Site No.174
West by : Road,
North by : Site No.196
South by : Site No.194

H. Prahlada, Advocate & Solicitor,
For H.P.Law, #2, 3rd Floor, Venkateshwara Complex, Yeshwanthpur, Bangalore-560022
M : 7760061073

PUBLIC NOTICE

General Public are hereby notified that, my client is proposing to develop the land described in the schedule given below and negotiations are in progress with its owner Mr. K.N. Rajanna son of (late) Nanjappa. Meanwhile, I am instructed to carry out the title due diligence of the Schedule Property and I have undertaken scrutiny of the documents to ascertain marketable title and lawful possession of the owner and person claiming under him. As part of the due diligence report, this public notice is issued to ascertain if there are any persons interested in the Schedule Property, therefore any person/s, any financial institution/s, GPA holder/s, entity/s, company/s, firm/s or body corporate/s claiming any right, title, claim interest or lien over the Schedule Property or any portion thereof and/ or opposing sale or development of the Schedule Property by my client are hereby notified to register their objections or claims, if any, with supporting authenticated documents, justifying such claims to the undersigned within **14 (fourteen) days** from the date of publication hereof for scrutiny and consideration.

If no objections/ claims are received as above within the stipulated period, my client will proceed with the completion of the proposed transaction as if there are no objections or objections, if any, that are deemed to have been waived.

SCHEDULE PROPERTY

All that piece and parcel of the residentially converted property bearing Survey No.104 measuring 3 acres 17 guntas (inclusive of 03 guntas of kharab land) situated at Avalahalli Village, Yelahanka Hobli and Bangalore North Taluk and bounded as follows:

East : Road and Survey No.99;
West : Survey No. 103 and Road;
North : Survey No. 100 and Survey No. 101; and
South : Survey No. 105.

Date: 25/04/2024
Place: Bengaluru

Mrs.Ashika U.
Advocate
Apt Law
No.1263 & 1264, 14th Floor
B Wing, Mittal Towers, M.G.Road
Bengaluru - 560 001

Powerful antidote to toxins in cobra, krait venoms developed

The current process of producing antivenom is outdated, involving injecting large animals with snake venom and collecting the animals' blood for the antibodies it produces. A group of scientists sidestepped animals and used human antibodies instead, eventually finding the potent 95Mat5

Rohini Subrahmanyam

For some people, snakes are exotic yet dangerous creatures of the wild; eerie but elusive, and not something to worry about in day-to-day life. For others, especially some farmers in India and Africa, they are a constant and terrifying threat to life.

Venom from snake bites leads to more than 100,000 deaths every year, with around 400,000 people left permanently disabled. The mortality burden is especially higher in low and middle-income countries in Africa and Asia, with India alone at a staggering average of 58,000 deaths in a year according to a 2020 report. However, considered a "poor man's disease", relatively less attention has been paid to the devastation caused by the bites. In some of these countries, snakebite incidence is distressingly high but inadequate access to proper healthcare prevents fast and efficient treatment, leading to disproportionately more deaths.

Things were set to improve in 2017 when the World Health Organization (WHO) finally stepped in to alert the world about one of its biggest hidden health crises. It officially classified snakebite envenoming as a highest priority neglected tropical disease.

The banded krait (*Bungarus fasciatus*) is a large species of elapid snake found in the Indian subcontinent. ARUP2602 (CC BY-SA 4.0)

Animals in the middle

A major issue is that the current process of producing antivenom is outdated: it involves injecting large animals like horses with snake venom and collecting the animals' blood for the antibodies it produces against the venom.

But the horses' blood could contain antibodies against other microorganisms as well, even against other components of the venom that are not harmful to humans. So only a fraction of the antibodies in the antivenoms is useful to humans, leading to more variability and the need for larger doses.

In addition, because these antibodies are produced in another animal, the chances of humans developing an adverse or allergic reaction to these antivenoms are also higher.

A variety of venoms

Driven by these concerns, a group of scientists – part of a consortium funded by the Wellcome Trust – decided to sidestep animals and use human antibodies instead. Using a type of toxin found in many kinds of snakes, they synthetically developed a broadly applicable human antibody against the toxin. Their results were recently published in the journal *Science Translational Medicine*.

"Venoms of snakes in India are so diverse that venoms of the same species across regions can't be neutralised by the same antivenom," Kartik Sunagar, head of the Evolutionary Venomics lab at the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, and one of the lead authors of the study, said.

"Even in the same geographical location, if you look at individuals of the same species, antivenom can only neutralise some venoms and not others. There is a stark variation in venoms, so that's why we wanted to figure out a solution that might work across regions and across species."

Screening billions of antibodies

The scientists focused on three-finger toxins (3FTxs) – one of the most abundant and lethal ingredients in elapid venoms. Elapids are a major medically relevant family of snakes that include cobras, kraits, and mambas.

The scientists narrowed their focus on α-neurotoxins, a specific class of 3FTxs that target receptors in human nerve and muscle cells. These toxins prevent the receptors from responding to acetylcholine, a neurotransmitter involved in carrying messages from the neurons to the muscles, leading to paralysis, an inability to breathe, and eventually death.

Joseph Jardine, an antibody expert at Scripps Research Institute, in California, led the initial work of "finding the needle in the haystack" – i.e. finding the best antibody that could target the toxins among the billions of human antibodies available.

The scientists first synthesised variants of their toxin of interest, called long-chain 3FTxs (3FTx-L, a type of three-finger α-neurotoxins), in the lab. They then screened billions of human antibodies expressed on the surface of yeast cells for ones that bound best to the toxins in their study. This selection of antibodies far exceeds any number of antibodies that an animal's immune system could cook up in response to a venom. After multiple rounds, they had a shortlist of antibodies that broadly reacted with most of the 3FTx variants they used.

All but king cobra

Nicholas Casewell's group at the Liverpool School for Tropical Medicine in the U.K. then tested the antibodies *in vitro* in human cells, to see which of them could best neutralise the toxins. This step brought them to an antibody they dubbed 95Mat5.

> The mortality burden is especially higher in low and middle-income countries in Africa and Asia, with India alone at a staggering average of 58,000 deaths in a year according to a 2020 report

Finally, Dr. Sunagar's group tested 95Mat5 *in vivo* in mice, to see if this broadly neutralising antibody could help protect against lethal doses of α-bungarotoxin, the 3FTx-L in the highly venomous many-banded kraits. They also injected mice with whole venom from king cobras, black mambas, and monocled cobras – all different elapid snakes from Asia and Africa with venom containing 3FTx-L variants – and tested to check how their antibody worked against them.

They found 95Mat5 worked well against all the snake venoms, protecting the mice from death, with the only exception being the king cobras' venom, where the antibody delayed but could not prevent death.

"We were surprised by the results of the black mamba, where the 3FTx-L is only 17% of the total venom composition. By knocking out that one toxin, we were able to protect mice fully from the other toxins in the venom in what may be a synergistic effect," said Irene Khalek, a scientist at Scripps Research Institute and one of the authors of the study.

An 'impossible' find

"The study is really well-performed, and I would expect that the antibody could be used as an important component in future antivenoms against mambas and cobras in Africa and Asia," Andreas Hougaard Laustsen-Kiel, head of the Tropical Pharmacology Lab at the Technical University of Denmark, said.

Dr. Laustsen-Kiel was involved in a different study, published in *Nature Communications* last year, where a group of scientists discovered a similar broadly neutralising antibody against long-chain α-neurotoxins from snakes.

"Because snake venoms are so complex, I would have thought it impossible to make an antibody that could knockout the whole venom," Dr. Sunagar said.

Closer to a universal solution

In the current study, the scientists found one reason why their antibody worked so well against their toxins of interest: the crystal structures of their antibody 95Mat5 and 3FTx-L variants revealed that the antibody bound the toxin exactly where the toxin would have bound its target receptor in human nerve and muscle cells. By mimicking the receptor-toxin interaction, the antibody could whisk the toxins away from the receptors and prevent them from exerting their deadly effects.

The current antibody works well against a specific kind of toxin present in the venom of many dangerous snakes, but it is also a small first step towards a universal antivenom.

The scientists said they are keen on discovering specific antibodies like these against toxins in other snake venoms as well, like in vipers.

"We need to discover antibodies for a couple of other toxins, then we can have a universal solution for the majority of snakes in the world," Dr. Sunagar said.

(Rohini Subrahmanyam is a freelance journalist.)

Experts say the injury rates should concern clients, including NASA. REUTERS

Injuries at SpaceX exceed industry average for second year

Reuters

Injury rates at SpaceX facilities continued to exceed an industry average in 2023, according to a review of safety data reported to U.S. regulators by the space venture controlled by billionaire Elon Musk.

The 2023 records, newly disclosed by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), also show that injury rates at some SpaceX facilities grew worse than those the company had reported in 2022.

At its manufacturing-and-launch facility in Brownsville, Texas, for instance, SpaceX reported 5.9 injuries per 100 workers, surpassing its rate of 4.8 injuries in 2022 and topping a space industry average of 0.8.

The company's high injury rate last year was the subject of an investigation that found at least 600 previously unreported worker injuries at the rocket and satellite company. Those injuries, *Reuters* reported, led to crushed limbs, amputations, serious head injuries, and one death.

SpaceX didn't respond to requests seeking comment on the latest figures.

Safety experts say the high injury rates should be of concern for SpaceX clients, including the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, or NASA. The federal space program has increasingly relied on SpaceX in recent years and as of 2022 had paid the company at least $11.8 billion (₹98,300 crore) for various contracts.

"NASA should be concerned about the quality of the work," said David Michaels,

An investigation found at least 600 previously unreported injuries at the company. Those injuries led to crushed limbs, amputations, serious head injuries, and one death

a former OSHA administrator who is now a professor at The George Washington University, Washington, D.C. High injury rates, he added, can be "an indicator of poor production quality."

A NASA spokesperson didn't respond to a request for comment. OSHA also didn't respond to questions about SpaceX's injury rate.

Reuters calculated the latest injury rates using data published by OSHA last week. The data for 2023 is the most complete yet provided by SpaceX, which reported injuries from eight major facilities, three more than it had in 2022.

In years prior, SpaceX hadn't reported any data for most of its sites, which include manufacturing, launch, and other facilities.

At a unit that retrieves rocket boosters in the Pacific Ocean, SpaceX last year reported 7.6 injuries per 100 workers, more than nine-times the industry rate.

Neither the company nor Mr. Musk, its billionaire founder and chief executive, have publicly addressed SpaceX's safety record in detail.

Gwynne Shotwell, SpaceX's chief operating officer, in March reposted a video on social media of emergency chutes being tested at a company site in Florida. Commenting on the video on X, the social media company that's also controlled by Mr. Musk, she wrote that "astronaut and personnel safety is SpaceX's highest priority."

THE SCIENCE QUIZ

How far can you count?

Vasudevan Mukunth

Please send in your answers to science@thehindu.co.in

QUESTION 1

If an octant is one-eighth, a quintant is one-fifth, and a trient is one-third, how much is a dodrant?

QUESTION 2

In the Indian numbering system and in the Urdu language, 1 followed by five zeroes is a lakh, seven zeroes is a crore, and nine zeroes is an arab. What is the name for the number in which 1 is followed by 11 zeroes?

QUESTION 3

In the same Indian numbering system and in Tamil, what is the word for the number of value 1 lakh lakh crore? Hint: In regular, non-numerical use, this word means 'strangeness'.

QUESTION 4

What's the name for the number worth 10,000? This name is descended from a Greek word meaning "of countless numbers" and is often colloquially used to mean a very large number.

QUESTION 5

The short and long scales are two ways to name numbers expressed as powers of 10. In the short scale, a trillion is a thousand-billion; in the long scale, it's a million-billion. What's the name of a quadrillion on the long scale?

Answers to April 23 quiz:

1. Metal named for island in the Mediterranean Sea – **Ans: Copper**

2. Element whose is derived from 'Belur' in Karnataka – **Ans: Beryllium**

3. Swedish village for which four elements are named – **Ans: Ytterby**

4. Element named for building material used in 'City of Light' – **Ans: Lutetium**

5. Element named for city whose name means 'merchants' harbour' – **Ans: Hafnium**

Visual: **Igor Kurchatov**

First contact: K.N. Viswanathan | P.N. Moorthy | Shiva Nigam | Viswanadharao Batchu

Visual: Name the horse in this picture. In the early 20th century, Wilhelm von Osten (pictured) claimed this horse could count, but it was later found to be a classic case of experimenter's bias. PUBLIC DOMAIN

For feedback and suggestions for 'Science', please write to **science@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Daily page'

Last day of campaign sees bike rallies, roadshows in 14 LS constituencies

Candidates can go on a house-to-house visit today seeking votes, without using public address system

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Bike rallies, roadshows, and last-minute meetings with voters marked the end of open canvassing on Wednesday as the silent period kicked in ahead of the elections to 14 Lok Sabha constituencies in Karnataka on Friday.

The candidates can go on a house-to-house visit seeking votes without using public address system now.

The high-profile Mandya constituency, where the former Chief Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy is the NDA candidate, witnessed a roadshow by the JD(S) leader even as his rival Venkataramane Gowda ('Star Chandru') of the Congress also held a roadshow accompanied by popular Kannada actor Darshan Thoogadeepa and Agriculture Minister N. Cheluvarayaswamy.

The former Prime Minister and JD(S) supremo H.D. Deve Gowda campaigned for his grandson Prajwal Revanna in the Hassan Lok Sabha constituency while Mr. Prajwal's Congress rival Shreyas Patel and his mother, Anupama Mahesh, campaigned in Hassan and Halli Mysuru. Another high-profile constituency, Bengaluru Rural, saw campaigning by Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar, whose brother D.K. Suresh is contesting as the Congress candidate against BJP's C.N. Manjunath, cardiologist. In the Mysuru Lok Sabha constituency, BJP's candidate and scion of the erstwhile royal family Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar participated in a roadshow in Madikeri while his Congress rival M. Lakshman took part in a public rally with AAP State president Mukhyamantri Chandru in Mysuru. Mr. Lakshman also took part in a bike rally.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, AICC president M. Mallikarjun Kharge, and former Chief Minister B.S. Yediyurappa were in North Karnataka constituencies where polling will be held on May 7.

A boy plays with a tyre in the shadow of buntings put up by a political party at Keragodu village in Mandya district. BHAGYA PRAKASH K.

INBRIEF

Water adalat today

Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) will hold a water adalat on Thursday between 9.30 a.m. and 11 a.m. to address the grievances related to water billing, delay in providing water supply and sanitary connections, delay in converting from domestic connection to non-domestic connection, and other connected issues.

According to a BWSSB press release, the adalat will be held at the following sub-divisions: Southeast 3: Central Jail Road, Koodlu GLR premises; Southeast 6: 9th Main, BTM 2nd Stage; West 1-3: Dr. M.C. Modi Road, Rajajinagar; Northwest 5: 1st Floor, 7th Main MEI Layout, Hesaraghatta Road; North 2-3: 1st Floor, Pinakini Bhavan, Doddaballapur Road, Major Unnikrishnan Road, Yelahanka; South 1-3: 21st Main Road, 11th Block, Anjanapura; Southwest 3: #3, MNK Park, Basavanagudi; Southwest 6: 4th Block, Banashankari 6th Stage, Pavanapura, opposite Raghavendra Swami Mutt, Lingadheeranahalli, and East 2-4: 1st B Cross, East NGEF Layout, Kasturinagar.

HAL conferred 'Outstanding PSU of the Year' award

Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. (HAL) has been conferred with the 'Outstanding Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) of the Year' award at the All-India Management Association Managing India Awards ceremony.

The award was given by Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar in Delhi on Tuesday.

Mr. Dhankhar praised HAL's performance and said its success story is inspiring, and the PSU is the pride of the nation. C.B. Ananthakrishnan, CMD (Additional Charge), HAL, said, "... We will continue to strive and contribute to nation building with our dedicated efforts to make India self-reliant in defence production." HAL recorded the highest-ever revenue from operations of over ₹29,810 crore (provisional and unaudited) in the financial year ended on March 31, 2024, registering a double-digit growth of around 11% as against 9% in the previous financial year.

ISRO chief to host session on social media on Saturday

ISRO Chairman S. Somanath will host a live session on the space agency's Instagram account @isro.dos on Saturday from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m. He would answer selected questions from the participants. Students, enthusiasts, and start-ups are invited to submit their questions to Chairman ISRO or ISRO's X (using the hashtag #asksomanathisro) or Facebook or YouTube handles (DM or comment). ISRO said Mr. Somanath will provide insights and guidance for students interested in pursuing careers in science, engineering, and technology.

E-paper edition

The Hindu offers more coverage of Bengaluru in the e-paper edition. (epaper.thehindu.com)

In the issue dated April 25, we have a story on how the 'kere-bavi' (lake-open well) system can help ease Bengaluru's water woes. Vishwanath S., water conservationist, urban planner and director of Biome Trust, breaks it down step by step explaining the importance of it.

Not holding BBMP polls may have little impact on electorate, but parties believe it is a boon

Shreyas H.S.
BENGALURU

The inordinate delay by successive governments in holding polls for the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) council has no doubt upset citizens. But leaders of political parties believe that ahead of the crucial Lok Sabha polls, this delay has helped avoid any disgruntlement arising over ticket distribution for the local body elections.

Not just the BBMP polls, successive governments have failed to conduct even zilla panchayat and taluk panchayat polls. Both BJP and Congress leaders who spar outside on various issues have similar views on local body polls. The BBMP has been running without an elected council for more than three years now. However, this may have little to no impact on the electorate as the Lok Sabha elections are fought on larger issues.

A Congress leader told *The Hindu* that the government did not want to ruffle any feathers or open the Pandora's box by conducting BBMP polls at a time when the Lok Sabha elections were nearing. Any disappointment at the local level would have harmed the vote bank of the party, he said.

The BBMP has not had an elected council for three years now. FILE PHOTO

The BJP, when in power, also delayed the BBMP polls as the Assembly elections were nearing. The BJP, which first carried out delimitation, increased the number of wards from 198 to 243. The Congress government revised the delimitation, reducing the number of wards from 243 to 225. Now, the reservation for the 225 wards is pending.

Sources said that just after the Congress was catapulted to power, both Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar were keen on holding the BBMP polls. But a few MLAs allegedly misguided them saying the ground for the polls is not favourable for the party. "MLAs cutting across party lines also presented how ticket distribution would lead to discontent among local leaders and workers. Hence, the government decided to think about the BBMP polls after the Lok Sabha elections," the sources added.

However, two former councillors from the Congress and the BJP, disputing the view of the MLAs and State leaders, said the presence of councillors would have helped in better mobilisation of voters at the ward level. "An MLA alone cannot travel to every ward in his constituency. Even now, the MLAs are depending on former councillors. Some of the councillors are not toiling on the ground as polls were not conducted. Congress leaders who are meeting the former councillors are assuring them of elections in September. If there is further delay, the councillors will start vying for the MLA ticket," said a former councillor.

Congress councillors say that with the implementation of the guarantee schemes and announcement of flagship projects for Bengaluru, it is the right time for the government to hold the polls. If the polls are further delayed, the party may lose the ground, they added.

Spreading the word

'Let's vote ride', an awareness campaign, was held in Bengaluru on Wednesday to encourage voters in the IT sector to exercise their franchise. Corporate leaders and several techies joined the 6-km cycle rally that was flagged off from ELCIA office. The event was jointly organised by district election office, B.PAC, Namma Nimma Cycle Foundation, ELCIA, and ELCITA.

Free *benne dosa*, free auto rides, special discounts for voters on polling day

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

To encourage voting, many establishments in Bengaluru, including restaurants, are offering goods and services for free or at a discounted price to those who vote in the Lok Sabha election on Friday.

The Nisarga Grand hotel on Nrupatunga Road will give *benne* (butter) dosa, ghee laddu, and juice to those who show their inked fingers on voting day under the 'Vote maadi, oota maadi' (cast your vote and have food) campaign. The hotel has done such campaigns for four (Assembly and Lok Sabha) elections since 2018.

"It is a sad thing that there was only 54% voting in Bengaluru during the last Lok Sabha elections. It is our right to vote in a democracy. As a part of our ongoing efforts to create awareness about this, some eateries are offering some food items like sweets and cakes either at a discounted price or for free, for those who display their inked fingers," said P.C. Rao, president, Bruhat Bengaluru Hoteliers Association.

Transport aggregator app Rapido has teamed up with the Election Commission of India and the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike to extend free autorickshaw and cab rides to senior citizens and differently abled voters on Friday under the 'SawaariZimmedariKi' initiative. Voters can use the code 'VOTENOW' to avail themselves of these exclusive rides.

Apart from these offers, amusement park Wonderla, near Bidadi, has also announced a 15% discount on tickets to the park on April 26, 27, and 28 to those who show the indelible ink mark on their fingers. 'Proactive for Her', a women's health clinic chain, has announced a 10% off on all its services for voters on the election day.

City witnesses Zero Shadow Day

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The city witnessed the celestial event of Zero Shadow Day on Wednesday. Shadows vanished from 12.17 p.m. to 12.23 p.m. as the sun aligned perfectly overhead.

At the Indian Institute of Astrophysics, more than 60 people gathered to conduct hands-on experiments.

According to IIA, the sun does not rise exactly in the east or set exactly in the west every day, and neither does it pass directly overhead every day. This is because of the Earth's axial tilt of 23.5 degrees, which is also the cause of seasons. The sun is directly over the Tropic of Cancer on June 21. It comes directly over the Equator on September 23 and is over the Tropic of Capricorn on December 22. It is then seen to journey northwards and is over the Equator again on March 21, and so on. Hence, the sun is directly over locations between the two tropics twice a year, and this day varies with latitude.

When the sun is directly overhead, the shadow of a vertical object falls under it, and hence, no shadow will be seen. This is called Zero Shadow Day. In Bengaluru and places in the same latitude, like Mangaluru and Chennai, the phenomenon occurs on April 24 and August 18.

Awareness programme on cancer held

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

An awareness programme, 'Longevity: A boon or a bane - an outlook to women's health and female cancers', was organised by Canara Bank, Regional Office, Bengaluru West, in association with Malleswaram Ladies Association Academy of Higher Learning on Monday.

Over 300 women participated in the event. Narasimhaiah Srinivasaiah, senior consultant, colorectal surgeon at Apollo Hospital, presented a detailed report on breast cancer, cervical cancer, and ovarian cancer, among others. Dr. Narasimhaiah clarified doubts of the participants, according to a release.

Canara Bank launched 'Canara Angel', an innovative and industry-first savings bank account that consists of three variants, such as Lavender, Rose and Orchid and are covered under Cancer Care Health Insurance of ₹3 Lakh, ₹5 lakh and ₹10 lakh, respectively. The programme was chaired by Mahesh M. Pai, general manager of Bengaluru Circle, and co-chaired by Muthulakshmi P., deputy general manager, Bengaluru, West Regional Office. Lakshmi V., honorary secretary, Malleswaram Ladies Association Academy of Higher Learning, was the guest of honour.

Timings
BENGALURU

THURSDAY, APR. 25		
RISE	06:02	SET 18:34
RISE	19:49	SET 06:42
FRIDAY, APR. 26		
RISE	06:01	SET 18:34
RISE	20:43	SET 07:26
SATURDAY, APR. 27		
RISE	06:01	SET 18:34
RISE	21:41	SET 08:15

Bengaluru Weather	max	min
Tumakuru	36	26
Mysuru	36	25
Bengaluru	38	25

Bengaluru Today
37°C Weather will be dry. Morning will be comfortable Day will be very warm and humid with uneasy afternoon. Night also will be comfortable.

Bengaluru Tomorrow
36°C The weather will be dry. Day will be very warm with uneasy afternoon. Night will comfortable

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THE HINDU
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Text&Context

THE HINDU

NEWS IN NUMBERS

The number of people who faced acute hunger in 2023

282 in million. Food insecurity worsened around the world in 2023, with millions suffering from hunger due to conflicts, particularly in Gaza and Sudan, according to UN agencies. AFP

The rise in India's pharmaceutical exports in FY24

9.67 in percentage. The country's drugs and pharmaceuticals exports increased year-on-year to $27.9 billion in 2023-24, even as total exports dipped by 3% in the last fiscal. PTI

The growth in the MAT entrance exam registration: AIMA

20 in percentage. The All India Management Association (AIMA), a federation of local management associations, has witnessed a growth in the registration for the MAT (Management Aptitude Test) in 2023. PTI

The loss posted by Boeing in the first quarter of 2024

355 in $ million. The aircraft has been in trouble since a door plug blew out of a Boeing 737 Max during a flight in January. The revenue decline reflects the crisis gripping the aircraft manufacturer. AP

The age of the idols unearthed from Haryana village

400 years. Three metal idols were unearthed during the excavation of a house construction project in Baghanki village. PTI

COMPILED BY THE HINDU DATA TEAM

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On the National Clean Air Programme

Why has the implementation of Clean Air Action Plans been inconsistent? Why are cities not using the allocated funds set aside by the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change? What are some of the tools which can improve our understanding of the origins of pollution?

EXPLAINER

Anirban Banerjee

The story so far:

When the Indian government launched the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) in 2019, it was to cut the concentration of atmospheric Particulate Matter (PM) by 20-30% by 2024, from 2017 levels. This was later revised to 40% by 2026.

What is the NCAP?

Under NCAP, cities continuously violating annual PM levels in India need to prepare and implement annual Clean Air Action Plans (CAAPs). To facilitate this, the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change has allocated ₹10,422.73 crore. Most cities proactively submitted their CAAPs yet their implementation has been inconsistent. On average, only 60% of the allocated funds have been used thus far, according to the Ministry, with 27% of cities spending less than 30% of their designated budgets. Visakhapatnam and Bengaluru have spent 0% and 1% of their NCAP funds, respectively. Implementation delays hinder NCAP's success, particularly delays in approvals from the competent authorities (for example, the technical specification of tendering processes or for procuring products such as mechanical sweepers and electric buses).

There is also a lack of standard operating procedures for the implementation process. Time-consuming tasks required to implement control measures and the absence of well-defined timelines create further delays. Yet other reasons include bureaucratic red-tape and lingering doubts regarding the effectiveness of proposed mitigation measures. After the recent findings over the inefficacy of outdoor smog towers, decision-makers' hesitation is justified. But overcoming this also requires a systemic approach based on Emissions Inventory (EI), Air Quality (AQ) modelling, and Source Apportionment (SA).

Clearing the air: An anti-smog gun spraying water in New Delhi on January 12. FILE PHOTO

How can scientific tools help?

EI and SA studies are critical to identify and understand the origins of pollution. EIs provide insights into local pollution sources and their contributions, allowing experts to forecast future emissions based on demographic shifts and technological advancements across sectors, among other factors. EIs also help shape targeted pollution control strategies. They have their limitations, too, particularly in assessing the impact of transboundary pollution sources – such as when determining the effect of stubble-burning outside Delhi on the city's air quality.

SA studies offer a detailed analysis of contributions from various pollution sources, including those located afar. However, they aren't suited for predictive analysis and require substantial resources, including specialised personnel and equipment for chemical analysis. SA studies also can't distinguish between the origins of pollution, like, say, emissions from diesel trucks 200 m away and 20 km away, because diesel emissions have similar chemical signatures.

These gaps can be bridged through AQ modelling, which informs our understanding of pollution dispersion, including from distant sources.

How are these being used?

Ideally, the cities should look into EI and SA data to pinpoint air pollutants and prepare mitigation measures targeting each polluting activity. According to the Portal for Regulation of Air-pollution in Non-Attainment cities, only 37% of cities have completed EI and SA studies, meaning the remaining 63% don't have a clear idea about what is polluting their air. Thus, the effectiveness of CAAPs is questioned if the cities don't know the individual emissions reduction potentials of their proposed mitigation measures. Based on the potential and infrastructure requirements, cities need to set proper yearly targets and fund them.

Moreover, the NCAP's reliance on concentration data – a measure of population exposure to harmful pollution – further complicates the situation. Pollution from high-emitting industries and other sources outside city limits, carried into urban areas by winds complicates urban air-quality management. Many existing control measures focus only on primary PM emissions, neglecting their secondary precursors. A shift towards comprehensive strategies addressing both primary and secondary pollutants is thus important. Further, although one of the NCAP goals is to set up infrastructure to forecast AQ, no city barring Delhi, Pune, Mumbai, and Ahmedabad has a decision-support system.

What does NCAP need to succeed?

Beyond the need for data and models, swift implementation on the ground is essential. For this, implementation agencies should seek to reduce bureaucratic red tape by utilising shared, standardised technical evaluations. As NCAP funding is linked with the performance of cities (based on the annual average PM concentration reduction), prior budgeting and time management play crucial roles. Technical feasibility, budgeting, and time estimates need to be part of the initial plans.

The journey towards cleaner air in India, as charted by NCAP, will be difficult but is necessary. NCAP's success hinges on a multifaceted approach that combines rigorous scientific studies, strategic funds, and swift and effective implementation of mitigation measures.

Author works in Air Quality at Center for Study of Science, Technology and Policy.

THE GIST

- Most cities proactively submitted their CAAPs yet their implementation has been inconsistent. On average, only 60% of the allocated funds have been used thus far, according to the Ministry.
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- Beyond the need for data and models, swift implementation on the ground is essential. For this, implementation agencies should seek to reduce bureaucratic red tape by utilising shared, standardised technical evaluations.

Why was the BJP candidate declared winner in Surat?

Why was the Congress candidate's nomination paper not accepted? What does the Representation of the People Act, 1951 state with respect to requirements for valid nomination?

Rangarajan.R

The story so far:

The BJP's candidate from the Surat Lok Sabha constituency in Gujarat has been declared elected unopposed. This follows the rejection of the nomination paper of the candidate set up by the Congress party and the withdrawal of nominations by other candidates.

What is the law for nomination?

Section 33 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 (RP Act) contains the requirements for a valid nomination. As per the RP Act, an elector above 25 years of age can contest Lok Sabha election from any constituency in India. The proposer(s) of the candidate should however be elector(s) from that respective constituency where the nomination is being filed. In case of a recognised party (national or State), the candidate needs to have one proposer. Candidates set up by unrecognised parties and independents need to be subscribed by ten proposers. A candidate can file up to four nomination papers with different set of proposers. This is to enable the acceptance of nomination of a candidate even if one set of nomination paper is in order.

Section 36 of the RP Act sets out the law with respect to the scrutiny of nomination papers by the Returning Officer (RO). It provides that the RO shall not reject any nomination for a defect that is not of a substantial character. However, it specifies that signature of the candidate or proposer found not genuine is grounds for rejection.

What is the current issue?

In the present case, the candidate of the Congress party for the Surat constituency, Nilesh Kumbhani had filed three sets of nomination papers. The proposers for these three nomination papers were his brother-in-law, nephew and business partner. A BJP worker objected to Mr. Kumbhani's nomination alleging that the signatures of his proposers were not genuine. The RO also received affidavits from the proposers claiming that they had not signed the nomination papers of the candidate. He sought reply/clarification from the candidate within a day on the objections raised. As the proposers could not be produced before the RO within the stipulated time for scrutiny, all three sets of nomination papers were rejected.

The election rules allow for a substitute candidate to be fielded by a political party. The nomination of this substitute candidate would be accepted if the nomination of the original candidate is rejected. In this case, the Congress party had fielded Suresh Padsala as its substitute candidate. However, the nomination paper of the substitute candidate was also rejected for the same reason, that is of the proposer's signature not being genuine. The other nominations were either rejected or withdrawn paving the way for BJP candidate Mukesh Dalal to be declared winner.

What is the legal recourse?

There have been at least 35 candidates who have been elected unopposed to the Lok Sabha. Majority of them were in the first two decades after independence with the last being in 2012.

In the instant case, however, the Congress party has alleged that the proposers were coerced to backtrack on their signatures. It has approached the Election Commission (EC) seeking to set aside the decision of the RO and restart the election process.

However, it is unlikely that the EC would act on this request as Article 329(b) of the Constitution read with RP Act provides that no election shall be called into question except by an election petition before the concerned High Court. One of the grounds on which such an election petition can be filed is improper rejection of nomination papers. Hence, the legal recourse available is to file an election petition in the Gujarat High Court.

The RP Act provides that High Courts shall endeavour to conclude such trials within six months, which has mostly not been followed in the past. Speedy disposal of election petitions would be a step in the right direction.

Rangarajan. R is a former IAS officer and author of 'Polity Simplified'. He currently trains civil-service aspirants at 'Officers IAS Academy'. Views expressed are personal.

THE GIST

- Section 36 of the RP Act sets out the law with respect to the scrutiny of nomination papers by the Returning Officer (RO). However, it specifies that signature of the candidate or proposer found not genuine is grounds for rejection.
- Nilesh Kumbhani had filed three sets of nomination papers. A BJP worker objected to Mr. Kumbhani's nomination alleging that the signatures of his proposers were not genuine.
- There have been at least 35 candidates who have been elected unopposed to the Lok Sabha.

‘Set up pandals near booths for party workers’

The BJP has petitioned the Election Commission seeking that it should allow putting up of pandals to provide shelter to party workers from the summer heat on the polling day near booths.

In the petition, the BJP requested the Election Commission to look at the issue from an humanitarian angle and allow setting up of such structures for political party workers. It also suggested that the cost of putting up shelters should be counted among the poll expenditure of the political party concerned rather than passing it onto the candidate’s expenses account.

Increasing summer heat and heatwave conditions in some parts has raised concern not just about voter turnout but also how party workers will cope.

Supporters brave the scorching heat at an election rally in Kalaburagi city. FILE PHOTO

Single ink mark for voters in Surpur

The 2.83 lakh electors in Surpur Assembly constituency (that comes under Raichur Lok Sabha constituency), where byelection and Lok Sabha polls will be held on the same day on May 7, will get a single ink mark on the left-hand forefinger.

Manoj Kumar Meena, Chief Electoral Officer for Karnataka, said voters will get to cast two votes (for byelection and LS but a single ink mark will be applied.

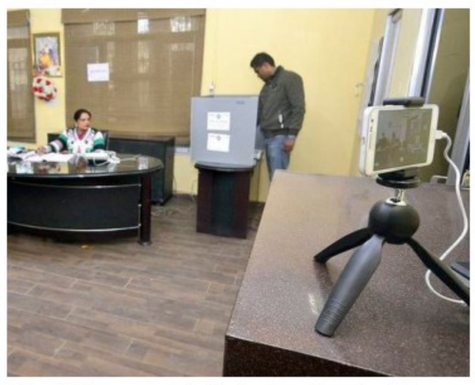
The bypoll was necessitated due to the demise of Congress MLA Raja Venkatappa Naik. Here, Raja Venugopal Naik, elder son of the late MLA, and former Minister Narasimha Naik from the BJP have been chosen to contest. Both Surpur Assembly and Raichur LS constituencies are reserved for Scheduled Tribes.

> The I-T Department is conducting raids on Congress workers deliberately to prevent them from campaigning.
>
> **D.K. SHIVAKUMAR**
> Deputy Chief Minister on a raid on his associate

Chunavana app and QR code to assist voters

People can download the Chunavana app to know the real-time status of queue and parking in polling stations. The QR code on voter slips can be scanned to navigate to their booths. Over 90% of voter slips have been distributed in BBMP areas and over 93% in other urban constituencies.

> Whether you vote for us (Congress) or not, at least come to my funeral if you think I have done something for Kalaburagi.
>
> **MALLIKARJUN KHARGE**
> AICC president



EC guidelines mandate that webcasting should be done in at least 50% of all polling booths. FILE PHOTO

Bengaluru Rural, Mysuru to take up 100% webcasting

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

To ensure there is no room for poll-related malpractices, the Election Commission will take up webcasting of the Lok Sabha elections in all polling booths of Bengaluru Rural and Mysuru Parliamentary constituencies on April 26.

Manoj Kumar Meena, Chief Electoral Officer for Karnataka, said the webcasting is being done on the basis of an assessment made by the Returning Officers (ROs) and observers of the constituency in consultation with the police. “Seven companies of Central paramilitary forces will be deployed in the 2,829 polling booths of Bengaluru Rural. Besides, webcasting will be taken up in 2,925 booths in Mysuru and 546 booths in Kodagu,” he said.

Venkatesh Kumar R., Additional Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) in Karnataka, said EC guidelines mandate that webcasting should be done in at least 50% of all polling booths. “Overall, webcasting is being done in 19,701 polling booths. Besides, CCTV cameras will be installed in 1,370 booths,” he said.

“The camera will transmit the images on real-time basis to our web servers. Simultaneously, the proceedings will also be recorded. This will begin right from mock polls till the EVMs are packed and dispatched to the de-mustering centres and strong rooms,” Mr. Kumar explained.

Electoral battle
Bengaluru Rural constituency has D.K. Suresh, brother of Deputy Chief Minister and KPCC president D.K. Shivakumar, pitted against cardiologist C.N. Manjunath contesting on a BJP ticket. In Mysuru Lok Sabha constituency, the battle is between scion of the erstwhile Mysuru royal family Yaduveer Srikantadatta Narasimharaja Wadiyar, who is the BJP candidate, and M. Lakshman from the Congress.

Govt. warns against denying paid holiday on polling day

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

The Labour Department, in a release, has reiterated that employers have to provide paid holiday to their staff on the day of polling. “Some trade unions and workers have been complaining that employers are not granting paid holiday on the date of polling,” it said, adding that all the employees of factories, shops and commercial establishments and other establishments shall be granted paid holiday for exercising the Constitutional right to vote.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission will set up voter facilitation centres in cluster polling booths.

The voter facilitation centre will be like a helpdesk for people to locate their booth in the cluster, and if the crowd is big, tokens will be issued for hassle-free voting experience.

As campaigning ends in 14 LS segments, EC sweats to get more voters to booths

Measures taken to ensure heatwave conditions do not affect turnout; 2.88 crore eligible to vote in the constituencies that go to the polls tomorrow

POLL PREPAREDNESS

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

With campaigning in the 14 constituencies that go to polls on April 26 ending on Wednesday, the Election Commission has made elaborate arrangements for the smooth conduct of polls. A total of 2.88 crore electors are eligible to vote in the 14 constituencies.

Addressing pressperssons here, Manoj Kumar Meena, Chief Electoral Officer for Karnataka, said all measures are being taken to increase the voter turnout, especially in 33 urban constituencies in this phase that recorded below average turnout in the previous elections. These include 28 in BBMP, three in Mysuru, and one each in Mangaluru and Tumakuru.

Heatwave
Besides, the EC has initiated measures to ensure that the heatwave conditions do not affect voter turnout. “The EC has issued guidelines on addressing the potential challenges posed by the heatwave and to ensure the safety and well-being of electors, especially senior citizens and persons with disabilities (PwD), as well as election personnel in the polling stations. Polling stations are equipped with adequate shade structures, such as tents, canopies or umbrellas, with provision for chairs, to protect voters from direct sunlight,” Mr. Meena said.

Cooling devices such as fans, wherever necessary, have been installed to maintain a comfortable temperature for voters and polling personnel. Also, adequate ventilation will be maintained in all polling stations and drinking water will be provided, he said.

While special medical kits to manage dehydration and sunstroke will be made available, trained ASHAs or ANMs will be deployed in the polling stations in coordination with the Health Department. One ambulance will be mapped to every 10-15 polling booths, Mr. Meena said.

Of the 2,88,19,342 electors in the constituencies that go to polls on April 26, over 1.43 crore are women electors and 3,067 third gender electors. A total of 30,602 polling booths, including 25 auxiliary booths, have been set up.

A total of 1.40 lakh polling officers, 5,000 micro observers and 50,000 civil police, apart from 65 companies of CRPF and Reserved Armed Forces from other States have been deployed in the 30,602 polling stations, he said.

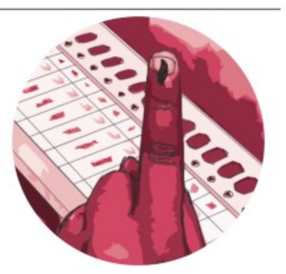
In the remaining 14 constituencies where polling will be held on May 7, a total of 2,59,52,958 electors, including 35,465 service voters are eligible to vote. This includes 1,29,66,570 women electors and 1,945 third gender electors. These constituencies have nearly 6.91 lakh young electors (aged 18-19), 2.29 lakh electors aged above 85, and 3.44 lakh PwD electors, Mr. Meena said.

While Kalaburagi Parliamentary constituency has the highest number of electors at 20.98 lakh, Uttara Kannada has the lowest with 16.41 lakh electors. A total of 28,269 polling stations, including 12 auxiliary stations, have been set up for the May 7 polls.

Overall, 5.48 crore electors, including 46,625 service electors and 5,012 third gender electors, are eligible to vote in the 28 Parliamentary constituencies in the State, Mr. Meena pointed out.

Alternative documents for voting if people do not have EPIC

- Aadhaar card
- MGNREGA job card
- Passbook with photograph issued by bank/post office
- Health insurance smart card issued under the scheme of Labour Ministry
- Driving licence
- PAN card
- Smart card issued by Registrar-General of India under NPR
- Indian passport
- Pension document with photograph
- Service identity card with photograph issued to employees by Central/State govt./PSUs/public limited companies
- Official identity cards issued to MPs/MLAs/MLCs
- Unique Disability ID (UDID) card issued by Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment, Government of India



Electors fact sheet

April 26 polls		May 7 polls	
Total electors in 14 constituencies:	**2,88,19,342**	Total electors in 14 constituencies:	**2,59,52,958**
Male electors:	**1,44,17,530**	Male electors:	**1,29,48,978**
Female electors:	**1,43,87,585**	Female electors:	**1,29,66,570**
Third gender electors:	**3,067**	Third gender electors:	**1,945**
Service voters:	**11,160**	Service voters:	**35,465**
Polling stations:	**30,602**	Polling stations:	**28,269**

EC books 23 cases of hate speech

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

In the run-up to the April 26 Lok Sabha polls in Karnataka, the Election Commission has booked 23 cases of hate speech, 28 cases of inducements, 15 related to misuse of religious places, and 15 cases pertaining to use of children in campaigns.

Manoj Kumar Meena, Chief Electoral Officer for Karnataka, said 189 cases have been booked in the 14 constituencies. While 12 cases of hate speech have been booked against the BJP, the highest, nine are against the Congress, and two against JD(S), he said.

With regard to inducements, nine cases have been booked against the Congress, the highest. While eight cases each have been booked against the BJP and Independents, three are against the JD(S).

Similarly for misuse of religious places, the BJP has eight cases against it, followed by six against the Congress, and one against an Independent candidate. Both the BJP and the Congress have seven cases each against them for using children in campaigns. One case is against an Independent candidate, Mr. Meena added.

Complaint against circulation of pen drive

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Following a private complaint regarding the circulation of a pen drive containing obscene videos pertaining to a candidate in Hassan, the Election Commission has asked the jurisdictional SP to investigate and take necessary action. “A private complaint has been lodged and the police are investigating. If it has been used in any of the IT platforms, including television, Internet, and social media, it will also be investigated under the Information Technology (IT) Act,” Chief Electoral Officer for Karnataka Manoj Kumar Meena said.

Summer of discontent in the land of coconuts in Karnataka

Sharath S. Srivatsa
TUMAKURU/CHITRADURGA

The prevailing drought has brought acute distress upon coconut farmers in Karnataka, who are already affected by the falling price of copra. They are now anxious about saving their coconut plantations as water scarcity has led to crop wilting in Tumakuru and Chitradurga districts.

While the delay in purchase of copra by NAFED has already hit them, the drying up of borewells in large tracts has forced them to purchase water to save their plantations. Though the JD(S) and Congress members raised the problems being faced of coconut farmers during the legislature session in February 2024, it is not spoken of much as an election issue, though copra procurement is connected to the Centre.

A farmer peeling copra from the shell at Tiptur in Tumakuru district; (right) copra being unloaded. BHAGYA PRAKASH K.

Delay and loss
“The delay in copra procurement has caused loss to us. The extreme heat has reduced the weight of copra. For about 1,000 coconuts, we would get upwards of 140 kg of copra, which has now reduced to 120 kg,” said Renukaswamy of Muguluru-Mayasandra in Tumakuru district, who had brought his produce to a rice mill that has been converted to a copra procurement centre. “Traders and middlemen were responsible for botching up the earlier procurement process, by registering a huge number of fake farmers, that led to its cancellation. Prices had crashed to less than ₹7,500 per quintal from about ₹15,000 a quintal in 2023.”

Maheshwaraiah, a farmer in Belgarahalli in Tiptur, said that though groundwater is available in some places, they do not have money to sink borewells. “We are yet to sell our copra and do not have money. Some who took loans and sank borewells are facing loss as the wells failed. Without water, the coconut palm is wilting.”

After a failed procurement attempt, the NAFED has decided to procure 70,000 tonnes of copra from Karnataka at a price of ₹12,000 per quintal while the State government is offering ₹1,500 per quintal. Normally, copra procurement begins by December and January, but this year, it started on April 1, and is likely to go on for the next six months in several centres.

To prevent a rush, each centre will collect 200 quintals daily. Farmers have been allotted time. A cap of 15 quintals per farmer has been fixed this year against 20 quintals last year. In Karnataka, about 58,000 farmers have registered to avail the support price. Karnataka is the largest supplier of edible copra in India , and is in demand for its sweetness.

Manipulation of price
“The prices dropped this year due to a glut and manipulation by traders in the APMC rates. Traders bid for low price in APMC, which became a standard price outside too. This issue has been fixed. Farmers in Tumakuru, Hassan and Chitradurga that fall under dry land agriculture have no alternative to arecanut,” said Tiptur APMC secretary S.B. Nyamgoud. Though the price of copra in the open market is ₹9,300 per quintal, it is likely to go beyond ₹10,000 per quintal in the coming days.

If the falling price of copra has given sleepless nights to farmers, the long dry spell and water scarcity has hit them hard in these summer months.

“We are running out of savings as we are spending more than ₹1,000 per water tanker to save our crops. The cost of a tanker varies from ₹900 per load to ₹1,600 per load depending on the distance from the source of water. I am buying tanker every alternative day. The drought relief of ₹2,000 given by the State Government is nothing when compared to our expenses,” said Ranganatha, who has two-and-a-half acres in Anesiddre Gollarahatti in Hiriyur, Chitradurga district.

At Baramagiri, farmer Kanthraj said: “In 2015-16, we lost our plantations due to drought. Now, we are on the verge of losing it again if it does not rain. It is very expensive to purchase water for irrigation.”

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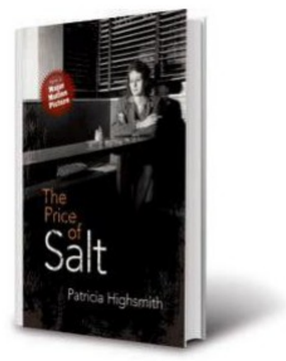
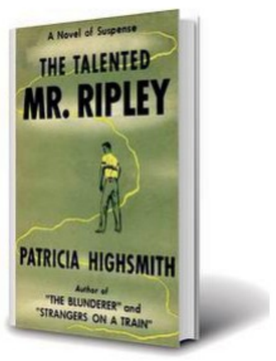
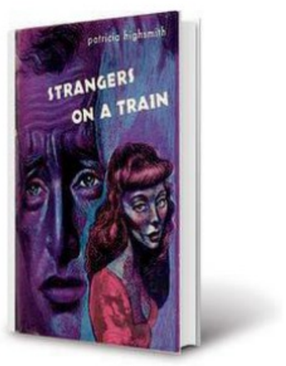






A still from *Ripley*.

Crime and dagger: rediscovering the stories of Patricia Highsmith

With a new adaptation on television, the books of the high priestess of crime fiction are being read all over again to find out more about the 'talented' Mr. Ripley, and also her other novels like 'Strangers on a Train'

Mini Anthikad Chhibber

One of the best things to come out of our cannibalistic consumption of content is the rediscovery of absolutely brilliant writers. There was the joy of meeting Monk and reading his alter ego, Stagg R. Lee's My Pafology, in Percival Everett's *Erasure* thanks to *American Fiction*. There was the shock and awe of revisiting the slicing up of Judgment Day in Liu Cixin's *The Three-Body Problem* courtesy of the incredibly shallow yet supremely enjoyable adaptation, *3 Body Problem*.

Steve Zaillian's gorgeous black-and-white *Ripley* is a chance to meet Patricia Highsmith's *The Talented Mr. Ripley* once more. Highsmith (1921-1995) wrote 22 novels, many of which were adapted to film, television and radio, including Alfred Hitchcock's famous adaptation of her debut novel, *Strangers on the Train* (1950).

Charming ambivalence

Highsmith wrote the first draft of the novel at a writer's retreat, which she got on Truman Capote's recommendation. A taut thriller, *Strangers on the Train* reveals the seeds for the characters that would populate her later books. An architect, Guy Haines, meets a young man, Charles Bruno, on a train. Charles wants to be rid of his strict rich father, while Guy is going to divorce his unfaithful wife, Miriam. Charles proposes swapping murders to throw the police off the scent.

The tale of nihilistic obsession lays the ground for Highsmith's following novels, populated with charming, immoral, sexually ambivalent young people, trying hard to make their way in a world that seems at once cold, cruel, grasping and ruthless. The character study with attendant questions of identity and guilt, shared shames, and folie a deux, the hallmarks of Highsmith's work, make their presence felt.

Strangers on the Train was followed by *The Price of Salt* (1952). A lesbian romance, Highsmith used the pseudonym Claire Morgan when it was first published. It was published as *Carol* in 1990 under Highsmith's name effecting what novelist Sarah Dunant called a "literary coming out"– Highsmith was not at all amused.

The Price of Salt follows the relationship between Therese, looking for a break as a set designer in Manhattan, and the glamorous Carol, who comes shopping for a doll at the department store, where Therese works. The semi-autobiographical novel (*Carol* was inspired by a blonde woman in a mink coat who came shopping for a doll at Bloomingdale's where Highsmith was working temporarily) presents a palpable difference from *Strangers on the Train*, in terms of theme and resolution.

Testing genres

The tentatively happy ending and lack of corpses (though there is a private detective) point to an author testing her wings in different genres. Todd Haynes adapted *The Price of Salt* into the award-winning *Carol* with Cate Blanchett and Rooney Mara in the lead.

In 1955, came *The Talented Mr. Ripley*, which captures the zeitgeist of the churn in America. Tom Ripley is a small time scam artist, who sees the chance to make it, and like Caesar, grabs it with both hands. The twinning of Ripley and Dickie, the lengths Tom is willing to go to acquire and keep his way of life, the casual violence and the clever way in which Highsmith gets us, the readers, to root for Ripley makes the gripping novel a perfect gem.

There were four books following *The Talented Mr. Ripley*. Collectively called 'The Ripliad', the books were *Ripley Under Ground* (1970), *Ripley's Game* (1974), *The Boy Who Followed Ripley* (1980), *Ripley Under Water* (1991). *Ripley Under Ground* is set six years after *The Talented Mr. Ripley*. Ripley is living the good life in France with his heiress wife, and faithful housekeeper. The novel set in the world of art, wrestles with the concept of real and fake, whether it is a painting or an effigy or a body.

Ripley's Game with mafia hits and sundry improbabilities feels the weakest of the series. *The Boy Who Followed Ripley*, which features another young American on the run from the law or perhaps himself, is masterful as is the final Ripley book, *Ripley Under Water*, where things buried in bodies of water refuse to stay submerged.

Ripley set the template for the cultured killer, whose millennial echo can be found in Caroline Kepnes' Joe Goldberg, the well-read psychopath of her *You* series. Like Ripley, Joe kills only if absolutely necessary or as a punishment for bad taste.

Comics, short stories

Apart from novels, Highsmith also wrote comic books (at the beginning of her career, between 1942 and 1948) and short stories, starting with *Eleven* in 1970 with a Foreword by Graham Greene and ending with the posthumously published *Nothing That Meets the Eye: The Uncollected Stories* in 2002. Many of the short stories feature animals' take on humans from a cockroach in 'Notes from a Respectable Cockroach' to a goat in 'Goat Ride' from her *Animal-Lover's Book of Beastly Murder*, and the sullen, inadvertently vengeful whale in 'Moby Dick II, or the Missile Whale' from *Tales of Natural and Unnatural Catastrophes*.

'The Snail Watcher' is an echo of Highsmith's fondness for snails that she kept as pets going for parties with hundreds of them in her handbag. Snails also feature in Highsmith's 1957 novel, *Deep Water*. Adrian Lyne's dreadful film adaptation starring Ben Affleck and Ana de Armas, earned some good karma by keeping the snails in the narrative.

The film also proves no matter how good, bad or ugly an adaptation, the books will always be there in their pristine avatar.

THE DAILY QUIZ

Please send in your answers to dailyquiz@thehindu.co.in

A quiz on important events and anniversaries that happened on April 25

Sindhu Nagaraj

QUESTION 1
This telescope was launched into operation on this day in 1990. Many observations from this telescope have led to breakthroughs in astrophysics, such as determining the rate of expansion of the universe. Name the telescope.

QUESTION 2
Considered one of the greatest and most influential actors of the 20th century, this actor was born on this day in 1940. The actor went on to receive the Academy Award for Best Actor for his role in *Scent of a Woman*. Name the actor.

QUESTION 3
On this day in 2021, Chinese filmmaker Chloé Zhao became the first person of colour to win the Oscar for best director. She was recognised for her work for which film?

QUESTION 4
This American professional basketball player died on this day in 2019. Nicknamed "Hondo", he revolutionised the "sixth man" role in the NBA, coming off the bench for the Celtics during his early years. Name the player.

QUESTION 5
This Italian inventor and electrical engineer, who shared the 1909 Nobel Prize in Physics, was born in 1874 on this day. Who was he? What was his invention?

QUESTION 6
This is an international observance commemorated every year on April 25 and recognises global efforts to control this disease. Observing this day sprang out of the efforts taking place across the African continent. What is it?

Visual question:
Identify this politician who served as the President of her country. She took oath on this day, in 1990. What is the milestone she is known for?

Questions and Answers to the previous day's daily quiz: 1. The number of countries in which Sachin has played international matches. **Ans: 16**
2. The venue in which Sachin scored the most international runs. **Ans: Sharjah (1,778 runs)**
3. The venue in which Sachin has taken two five wicket hauls in ODIs. **Ans: Kochi**
4. Sachin became the first overseas player to play for this county in the English county championship. **Ans: Yorkshire in 1992**
5. Sachin has scored 34,357 international runs. If we consider the numbers between 0 and 100 as runs in an innings, Sachin's scores did not include these two numbers. **Ans: 58 and 75**
6. Sachin shared century partnership with this person the most in international cricket. **Ans: Saurav Ganguly (38)**
Visual: Identify these players. **Ans: Ans: Ranjitsinhji, Duleepsinhji and Zal.R.Irani. The Ranji Trophy, Duleep Trophy and Irani Trophy are named after them. Sachin is still the only Indian cricketer to have scored century on debut in all three competitions**
Early Birds: Nobody got all the correct answers

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Know your English

K. Subrahmanian

"Iterate, reiterate (D. L. Narasimham)"

"'Iterate' means 'to say or do again.' It is from the Latin '*iterum*', meaning again. 'Reiterate' means 'to say or do again and again'. Says a writer 'If you have said something once and you now say it again, you are not reiterating. You are iterating. From the third time on, you are reiterating'. But this distinction is not valid now. These days 'iterate' is generally used in mathematical and technical writing but rarely in common parlance. 'Reiterate' is the word that is generally used. 'Reiterate' does not just mean 'repeat'. It is used when you want to restate something emphatically.

I should like to reiterate that this decision will have consequences."

"Pre-emptive action (K. Bhaskara Rao)"

" 'Pre-emptive' means 'done before other people have a chance to act.'

The Army launched a pre-emptive attack that disabled the enemy.

The plans of the Opposition were pre-empted by the Government."

"Racket, racquet (S. Madhavi)"

"Both spellings are acceptable. He got his tennis racquet from America. 'Racket' is more common than 'racquet'. The 'a' is pronounced like the 'a' in 'man' and the 'e' as in 'bit.' The word is from the Arabic 'rahah', meaning palm of the hand. 'Racket' also means 'a loud, confused, disturbing noise'.

They made such a racket last night that I could not sleep.

Another meaning is 'illegitimate enterprise or occupation.

No country is free from drugs racket.

'Racket' is also used humorously to mean 'business or occupation'.

By the way, what is your racket? She is in the modelling racket.

A racketeer is one 'who operates a dishonest business'.

'Racket' used as a verb means 'move about noisily,' 'join in wild social activities.'

They racketed around in their old car."

"Stymied (C. Vinod Kumar, Thrissur)"

"This is a golfing term. It is also used figuratively. In golf, 'a player was laid a stymie if, on the putting-green, the opponent's ball fell in the line of his path to the hole (provided the balls were not within 6 inches of each other). To hole out could only be achieved by a very difficult lofting stroke.' Now figuratively 'stymie' means 'a difficult situation'. 'Stymie' as a verb means 'to obstruct'.

His plan to construct a hospital was stymied by the Municipal Corporation.

'Stymie' is also spelt 'stymy'."

"A. Ranganathan, Madras writes: "Dr. Manmohan Singh, the Finance Minister, told Parliament recently that he did not 'beg with the Oxford-Cambridge Society to grant an Oxford scholarship to his daughter.' I suppose one can 'beg' or 'beg of an institution. Don't you think it is an incorrect use of the English language? I am distressed that Dr. Manmohan Singh who studied at Cambridge and Oxford, is a 'worthy' foeman of Queen's English!"

"This linguistic devaluation will have only a marginal effect. By this our Finance Minister has sent signals, loud and clear, that India, a sovereign republic, will not kowtow to anyone, be it a queen or her English."

Published in The Hindu on October 8, 1991.

Word of the day

Regale:
provide with choice or abundant food or drink

Synonym: treat

Usage: *He regaled us with tales of his youth.*

Pronunciation: bit.ly/regalepro

International Phonetic Alphabet: /ɹɪˈgeɪl/, /ɹəˈgeɪl/

For feedback and suggestions for Text & Context, please write to **letters@thehindu.co.in** with the subject 'Text & Context'

Can a reversion to the 'kere-bavi' system help ease Bengaluru's water woes?

Bengaluru was once dependent on its *kere-bavi* system for its water needs almost until the mid-19th century. Later, pipe water supply came in and many of the lakes and wells fell into disuse

Shilpa Elizabeth
BENGALURU

Doddanekundi lake dried up due to a lack of rain last year in Bengaluru. BHAGYA PRAKASH K.

What has continental drift got to do with *keres* (lakes) and *kalyanis* (stepwells) in Bengaluru?

Vishwanath S., water conservationist, urban planner and director of Biome Trust, breaks it down step by step.

The geological phenomenon that started around 200 million years ago with the breaking of Pangea led to the rise of the Himalayas.

The towering Himalayas trap the winds from Arabian sea and Bay of Bengal. This results in monsoon, the major source of water for Bengaluru, a landlocked city situated on deccan plateau.

To hold on to this precious rain water, people started constructing *kalyanis* and *keres* in the township almost 1200 years ago.

'Geology is destiny,' says Vishwanath establishing the connection.

Bengaluru, once known as the 'city of thousand lakes', depended on its *kere-bavi* (lake-open well) system for its water needs almost until the mid-19th century. Later pipe water supply came in and many of the lakes and wells fell into disuse.

In the era of climate change, can the *kere-bavi* system aid sustainable living? Does this piece of heritage have a functional future in a modern society? Vishwanath, who was speaking at the National Gallery of Modern Art, Bengaluru commemorating world heritage day, answers in the affirmative.

We need to get back to the kere-bavi culture, but with a modern scientific approach, he says.

The well culture

India, the world's largest user of groundwater, has had a long-standing connection to wells that goes all the way back to Indus valley civilizations.

"In Mohenjodaro every third house had a well. Dholavira had rainwater harvesting and wells. Keeladi in Tamil Nadu had wells. We call it the Indus Valley or Indus River civilisation. But it was actually a well culture," says Vishwanath.

Coming to Bengaluru, along with the open wells the man-made tanks also become part of the water equation.

"Bengaluru has three major valleys and about 186 *keres* remaining. These *keres* either have water or have the potential for water," says Vishwanath pointing out that each kere and valley are different.

"In the Vrishabhavati valley keres will be small and deep. In Dakshina Pinakini which is in the Koramangala-Challaghatta valley and the Hebbal valley the keres will be shallow wide and large - for example the Bellandur or Jakkur lakes."

The kere-bavi heritage

The history of these *keres* predates Kempegowda according to writings on inscription stones.

"First rule of thumb for all *keres* of Karnataka was that the water-spread or the area of water should be equal to the command area," says Vishwanath.

Command area is the total area around a reservoir that can be irrigated using the water in it.

"*Keres* in this part of the world grew paddy. Water, since it was ephemeral, was quickly converted to paddy which would then be stored for three years. Paddy is the best form of converting surplus water to grain, even better than raggi. In terms of gender, most of the work in the fields was done by women," Vishwanath explains.

Vishwanath S.

The *neerugantis* managed the distribution of water in the tanks so much so that the farmer after planting the paddy would only come next in time to harvest it. The rest was left to the neerugantis who would distribute water proportionately to all fields. Vishwanath further notes that the command area would always have a well which played a critical role. The *kere* feeds the *bavi* through which water seeps into the aquifer. The water from the wells was also used for irrigation.

"The *kere-bavi* together provided water security in the region," Vishwanath says.

Kere as a feudal construct

Heritage, however, can be a tricky thing. As much as it is easy to romanticize the 'good old times', Vishwanath steps in to remind that it was not a glorious romantic culture as it may seem. The social dynamics was one of oppression, he says.

"Keres were feudal constructs. Water in the *keres* only benefited those who had lands... So *keres* can be creators of inequity in a village unless the landless, especially from a caste class angle, were included as beneficiaries of water right from the beginning."

Then the question is, does a feudal artefact have a place in a democratic society? If so, what should be the governance mechanism? How to bring equity around the distribution of water from the *keres*?

"The way to do that is to organise around making sure that apart from the command area, groundwater is recharged and those who have land outside the command area have equitable access to groundwater. That is the construct we need to think of and not just the restoration of a physical water body," says Vishwanath who adds that environmental benefits should be byproducts of social hydrology and equitable water access.

City as a disruptor of keres

Yet another important aspect is the desilting of lakes. Vishwanath reminds that during desilting it's crucial to not just desilt *keres*, but also the *poshakaluves* and *raja kaluves* which bring water into the lakes and take them out to the fields respectively.

The great famine of 1876-78 wreaked havoc in the princely state of Mysore.

The Famine Campaign in Southern India, a book by William Digby, documents the number of people who died in the Mysore Kingdom as 12.5 lakhs, around 1/4th of its total population. In Bengaluru alone, close to 1 lakh people died of hunger and thirst.

"The glorious 1,000 keres could not support the population of 1.8 lakhs. If you have one year of drought the *kere and bavi* can support you. But if you have three years of drought the local water alone cannot support you," says Vishwanath cautioning against the over romanticising of *keres* as the sole solution to the city's water problems. Following the famine years, to ensure water security the Hesaraghatta water supply scheme was completed in 1896 to bring pipe water supply from a river to the city. This was Bengaluru's first piped water system and later came the TG Halli and Cauvery pipelines.

Kere in a modern society

So, what could be the new role of *keres* in cities?

He notes that Cauvery River is the lifeline, meanwhile local water would be important wherever the pipe network has not reached yet.

"Keres have now a new role of being filled with treated wastewater, and this way they will not have water for just three months in a year, but for 365 days," he says, pointing out that we now have the technical capabilities to do the same.

"The *kere-bavis* are supplements and not replacements. They have a significant ecological role, a microclimate role and so on. But we should not start to imagine them as drinking water sources anymore," he told *The Hindu*.

According to him filling the *keres* with treated wastewater will help to recharge the aquifers more and supplement the water requirements for the city.

"This way we can ensure that a *kere-bavi* system is more just and accessible to all including nature," he says.

Recently the *kere-bavi* system was revived in Devanahalli in a similar fashion. The Biome Trust was one of the parties involved.

The town was dependent on 110 deep borewells which give saline hard water. Members of the Mannu Vaddar community, the traditional well diggers, revived the Sihineer kere and the old open well next to it. The well was linked to a water treatment plant which uses UV disinfection chlorination to ensure the water is safe and potable. This way the Devanahalli town gets about 200,000 litres of water a day.

"The water thus created is climate-resilient. And because it comes from a *kere-bavi* link which is traditional, people see the fish and the tortoise in the well and don't associate it with wastewater. It's clean water that you see. Therefore the yuck factor is broken," Vishwanath says.

Yet another example is the Lakshmi Sagara Lake in Kolar which is one of the first in India to be filled with treated wastewater. The water is being used mainly for agricultural purposes in the region.

Vishwanath says, "The perfect solution would be when everybody is connected to the Cauvery network. In the interregnum the *keres* will still have a role because of groundwater.

So, in that period, please fill the *keres* with treated wastewater because this is an emergency."

Sixth edition of PODOCON on May 25, 26

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Podiatry, a branch of medicine dedicated to the study, diagnosis, and medical and surgical treatment of disorders of the foot, ankle, and lower extremity, has taken into consideration the role of biomechanics in diabetic foot in the developed countries and India needs to move in the same direction, according to experts. But podiatry and biomechanics have not received the attention they deserve in a developing country like India where the disease burden is high.

To fulfil this objective, Foot Secure has organised PODOCON, a conference on May 25 and 26 in association with the IISc, the American Limb Preservation Society, and the Diabetic Foot Society of India. This is the sixth edition of PODOCON and over 500 delegates from India and neighbouring countries, encompassing a diverse group of professionals such as diabetic foot surgeons, orthopaedic surgeons, plastic surgeons, diabetologists, endocrinologists, podiatrists and so on are attending the conference, accordig to a release.

International Day of Play and the Karnataka connection

Children from Udipi and Vijayanagara provide their inputs and help shape the features of this UN Day

Liffy Thomas
BENGALURU

Of the 10,000 children from across the globe who participated in these discussions, more than 400 were from Karnataka. V. RAJU

International Day of Play is the latest addition to the United Nations days of special observance. On March 25, with the support of 140 countries, the United Nations General Assembly passed a resolution earmarking June 11 as the International Day of Play, an effort to protect children's right to play, clubbing it with other fundamental rights.

Children from Karnataka

This endorsement signals a major moment for a group of children from the Udupi and Vijayanagara districts of Karnataka. These children participated in a significant worldwide exercise to chisel out the guidelines of the Day.

The exercise, involving children from various countries, had been initiated by the Child and Youth Friendly Governance Project.

The Project had brought these children on board through NGOs in their respective countries. In India, The Concerned for Working Children (CWC) was among the NGOs it had coordinated with.

With these children weighing in with what they felt the Day should signify as well as it should not, a set of guidelines under what is titled Children and Young People Call to Action was born. Focus group discussions have been taking place online since last year. Of the 10,000 children from across the globe who participated in these discussions, more than 400 were from Karnataka. Five children were nominated to be members of the Children and Youth Advisory Group (CAYAG), says Deepti Colaco, Networking and Engagement, The Concerned for Working Children. This motley group was nominated by the children themselves. This included members of Makkala Sanghas (a collective of school-going children and out-of-school children) and of Bhima Sangha (Working Children Union), says Deepti.

Besides calling for a UN Day to promote children's right to play, the call to action is an attempt to remind various stakeholders including parents, school management and governments about the role they can play in protecting this right.

The call to action highlights play as a right for all children, especially those with special needs, those living in poverty and in conflict-ridden countries, says Deepti. Other supporting organisations include Save the Children International, Eurochild, International Play Association, BRAC, Play in Education, Development, and Learning (PEDAL) the University of Cambridge and The LEGO Group.

Barriers to play

According to the report by the Child and Youth Advisory Board, children and young people, particularly those with special needs face many barriers to play. One in three children do not have the time to play; one in five lack safe spaces to play; and one in five have no one to play with.

When deprived of play, children experience boredom, sadness, disappointment and loneliness. Some even get angry, says the report.

Among the recommendations are providing children with more time and opportunities to play, including in school; creating safe and accessible places to play, including for children with special needs; and providing support in developing social skills through play.

FROM THE ARCHIVES
The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO APRIL 25, 1974

Racket in Bus Tickets: MLA's Allegation

Bangalore, April 24: Mr. Venkatalingaiah (Cong-O) made allegations in the State Assembly to-day that there were instances of duplication of tickets issued in the buses of the Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation.

Mr. Venkatalingaiah who was participating in the discussion on demands relating to the Motor Vehicles Department and Housing handed over two tickets to the Minister through the Speaker which, he said, had the same code number. The tickets had been issued in a Bangalore city transport bus recently, he alleged.

The member suspected that there must be a 'racket' in bus tickets and wondered whether such things had the blessings of the Government.

Rural Housing Scheme to be Intensified in Karnataka

Bangalore, April 24: Mr. K.H. Ranganath, Transport and Housing Minister told the Karnataka Assembly today that greater emphasis would be laid in future on low income, subsidised industrial and people housing programmes to help weaker sections by pruning the allocation for the middle income housing schemes.

The Minister, who was replying to the discussion on demands pertaining to the Motor Vehicles Department and Housing said that the rural Housing scheme would be intensified by allotting more funds. Under the scheme Rs. 4,000 was given as loan repayable in 20 annual instalments.

Taking a break

New Delhi hip-hop duo Seedhe Maut, who will be in Bengaluru on April 27, will perform songs from their newest album *Lunch Break*

Anurag Tagat

Two is company Rappers Encore ABJ aka Abhijay Negi and Calm aka Siddhant Sharma who are Seedhe Maut. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

New Delhi hip-hop duo Seedhe Maut are undoubtedly among those who have grown with their audience in just under a decade.

Where they first offered stories of growing up in middle class India with artiste aspirations on albums such as *Bayaan* (2018) and *Nayaab* (2022) with producer Sez On The Beat, their mixtapes and the newest, *Lunch Break*, were forged with more wide-ranging interests – sometimes party-friendly, at other times wholesome when they take stock of their journey so far.

Along the way, rappers Encore ABJ aka Abhijay Negi and Calm aka Siddhant Sharma (who also produces tracks among the duo) have painstakingly built a core audience across the country. This allowed them to graduate, in a sense, from club shows to big outdoor shows.

"We've always seen ourselves playing to sold out stadiums. Playing in clubs is a part of the journey and we enjoyed it a lot, but we're here to play on the biggest stages we can," the duo say in a joint interview. Seedhe Maut have full bragging rights on that front and they've taken it a step further by launching their own label dL91.

Referencing the massive, 30-song mixtape *Lunch Break*, the duo have teased their next album *Kavi Kehna Chahte Hai*, but emphatically insist that they are "still on a lunch break". To that end, their *Lunch Break* tour – which stops by Bengaluru on April 27 at Forum South on Kanakapura Road – is their way to celebrate the album. Rightly so, because not only does it feature some of ABJ and Calm's fiercest lyrics and delivery, but also features rap singers such as Badshah, KR$NA, Sikander Kahlon and several more.

Encore ABJ says about the tour so far, "It's been better than expected, we've been doing some of our biggest shows in some cities where we've never performed before. It's our first self-produced tour under dL91, so we're trying to make sure it's properly done."

What is it like choosing from a 30-track album such as *Lunch Break* for each stop of their 13-city tour? Calm says, "We make songs to play out live. Having 30 tracks to choose from depending on the city and how we're feeling is special. The hard part is choosing which ones to leave out."

Although their previous gig commitment to perform in the city fell through at the last minute, Seedhe Maut say they're looking forward to being back. "Bangalore is always special. It is a music-loving crowd there and the city has always shown us a lot of support. This is shaping up to be our biggest Bangalore show yet so we can't wait to come back to the city," the duo say.

The legacy of Seedhe Maut and their place in Indian hip-hop has got to a stage where it is clear that they are influencing the next wave of Hindi rappers. Their advice for up and coming artistes is simple; "Just be yourself, and be true to your music."

As for their plans in 2024, Seedhe Maut are chipping away at their upcoming album *Kavi Kehna Chahte Hai*. "It's coming along and shaping up to be a big project! We're still on a *Lunch Break* though, so more updates on *Kavi* soon!"

Seedhe Maut perform on April 27 at Forum South Bengaluru, Konanakunte Cross. Entry: ₹1,179, plus ₹500 cover charge. Tickets available on Zomato Live.

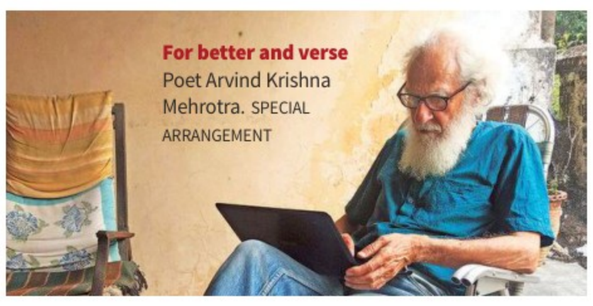
Poets and palettes

Literature enthusiasts in Bengaluru can look forward to April 28. For, renowned poet and translator Arvind Krishna Mehrotra will be in conversation with accomplished author and poet Jeet Thayil at the Bangalore International Centre (BIC) in Domlur. This special event promises an interesting discussion of translation and poetry.

The discussion centers around Mehrotra's personal journey translating the works of 17th-century poet Rahim. This process of rediscovery extends beyond the poems themselves, leading Mehrotra to reconnect with forgotten fragments of his own childhood.

Mehrotra, whose recent books include *Book of Rahim & Other Poems* (2023) and a translation of Vinod Kumar Shukla's poems, *Treasurer of Piggy Banks* (2024), brings a wealth of experience to the conversation. He is likely to talk about the challenges and rewards of translation, exploring how cultural and linguistic nuances can be bridged to bring a poet's voice to life for a new audience.

The event concludes with a Q&A session, offering a chance for the audience to engage with the speakers and delve deeper into the world of translation. Attendees can ask questions about the specific challenges of translating Rahim's work, the role of personal connection in the translation process, and the broader impact of translation on literary appreciation.



For better and verse Poet Arvind Krishna Mehrotra. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

While literature lovers gather for the Mehrotra-Thayil discussion, Art Park, a Bengaluru institution dedicated to fostering connections between artists and the public since its inception, marks its 75th edition with a celebration. Attendees can immerse themselves in a diverse array of artistic expressions, from live painting sessions and sculpture exhibitions to interactive installations and performances by local musicians and dancers.

At Bangalore International Centre on April 28. Free entry on a first come first serve basis. For more information, visit bangaloreinternationalcentre.org.

Catching them young

Let the music play Radha Thomas, one of the participants at the event. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Ruth Dhanaraj

Ever since its inception in 2012, International Jazz Day has been celebrated the world over on April 30, every year. Chipping in their mite for the great genre that is jazz, is the Bangalore School of Music, which will be celebrating the occasion with an interesting line up spread over three days.

According to Jagadeesh MR, Director, Bangalore School of Music (BSM), there will be jazz-related events on April 27, 28 and 30, to ring in the festivities. "Of late, we have been witnessing a lot of youngsters taking to jazz and it is quite heartening to see them play complex jazz standards," says Jagdeesh.

The first day of the festival will see the students of BSM and younger musicians who have been frequenting Cafe Jazz sessions showcase their skills. Cafe Jazz is a monthly event held at Goethe Institut where the city's up-and-coming musicians bond with their audiences and each other over performances.

"Audiences can expect to hear the August Quartet which was birthed at the Cafe Jazz sessions; Pockets & Changes, a trio led by 19-year-old Leanne Besterwich and the Deep Blue Brass, an ensemble which plays only brass instruments such as saxophones, trumpets and trombones, led by Melvin Manoharan," says Jagadeesh, adding that BSM students and others will part of the line-up on day one.

The second day will see senior musicians and pros take to the stage at Bangalore International Centre. The artistes who will be performing include the Radha Thomas Ensemble, the Gerard Machado Network, MoonArra and, "a young percussionist Sunil Ramesh who will be displaying and showcasing Afro percussion, with a drummer called Rohit," says Jagadeesh.

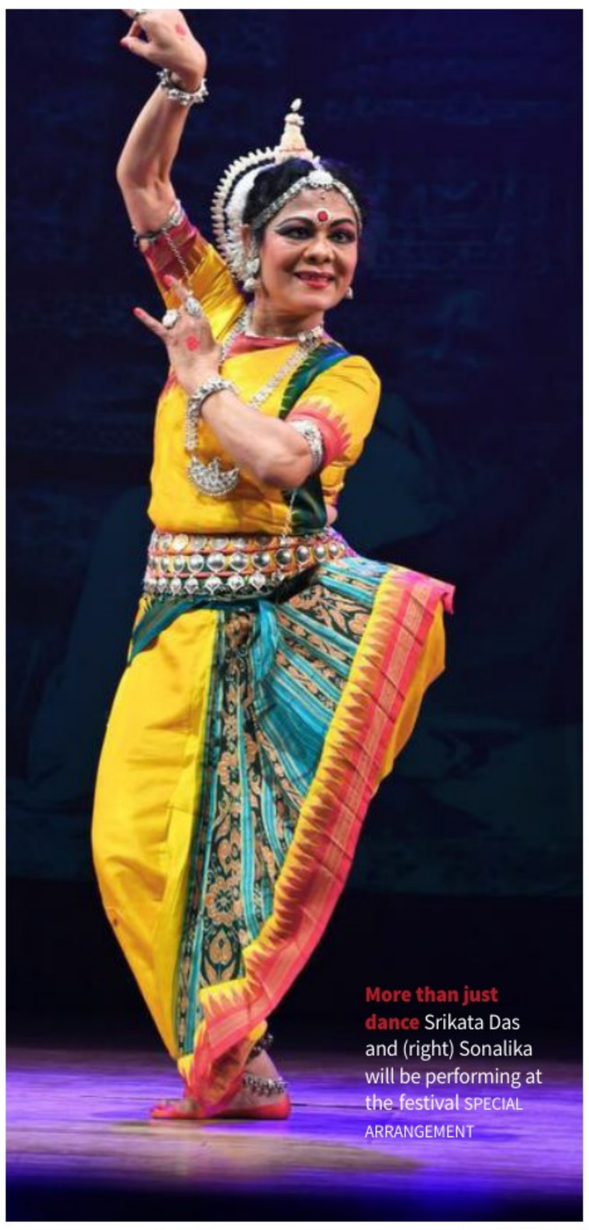
Day three of the International Jazz Day Festival will take place at the Museum of Art and Photography where MoonArra will engage with Prakash Sontakke in a musical conversation on Indian Classical and Jazz.

"We will be performing a lot of our own compositions and breaking them down, explaining to the audience how Indian classical music and other world influences connect with jazz," he says.

Jagadeesh says that the events on all the three days are free and open to all. "That's the spirit of International Jazz Day in itself because on this day, it is acknowledged that you're giving back to the music which has given you such a lot."

International Jazz Day will be celebrated on April 27 at Bangalore School of Music from 4pm, on April 28 at Bangalore International Centre from 3pm and on April 30 at Museum of Art and Photography from 6pm. Entry free.

Tribute to Odissi and Kelu Babu



More than just dance Srikata Das and (right) Sonalika will be performing at the festival SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Shilpa Anandraj

Odissi classical dance is considered one of the most sensual forms and mostly depicts the songs from Gita Govinda. The form, is inspired by the Gotipua dance from Odisha. The credit for popularising the dance form goes to legendary dancer-teacher, the late Kelucharan Mohapatra, who created most of the Odissi choreographies that are performed across the globe today.

Bengaluru- based dancer, Sonalika Padhi Purohit, wants to present that legacy of Kelu Babu (as he was affectionately known) through her dance festival, Kala-dhi. This is the second edition of the festival and will be staged on April 26 and 27.

The event will feature senior Odissi dancers including Sikata Das, Pranati Mohanty and Ratikanth Mohapatra and his dance ensemble, Srjan on the first day with Sonalika's students from her dance school, Ekaagra Svarasa Academy, Bengaluru performing on the second day.

The aim, explains Sonalika over a call from her dance school in Whitefield, is to showcase the traditional form of Odissi. "That is why we have senior dancers who are direct students of Kelucharan Mohapatra. I believe as the dance is taught from one generation to another, there may be a tendency for the purity of the original form to be diluted. We want to retain the purity as we grow with the current generation of dancers."

Ratikanth, who is Kelu Babu's son, is interested in the evolution of Odissi, Sonalika says. "This is where new movements are created with contemporary themes and ideas keeping in mind the traditional structure and form of Odissi. He will present a traditional dance piece choreographed by his father, while his students will present an evolution later in the evening."

Sonalika started learning Odissi as a child and has won the Aekalavya Award, Nrita Ratna Award with titles such as Odissi Pratibha, Nritya Suvarna Shree and Nritya Shiromani. She started her training under Rabindra Swain and Sundar Lal Patel and currently pursues her dance studies under the guidance of Sikata Das and Pranati Mohanty.

Though having a masters in Biotechnology, 41-year-old Sonalika gave up her job as a scientist in Lucknow, to pursue Odissi. She even founded Ekaagra Svarasa Academy in Whitefield in 2017, and is currently compiling Odissi textbooks in English. In the decade that she has lived in Bengaluru, she has been actively involved in teaching Odissi to the students from the Siddapura Government School.

"We focus on teaching not just dance, but also the historical and theoretical aspects of Odissi," says the dancer, who has over 100 students training under her. The show, Sonalika says, is open to all. "We want to promote Odissi and bring in as many students to learn this dance form and preserve its authenticity and beauty for generations to come."

Kala-dhi will be staged on April 26 and 27, 5.30pm onwards at ADA Rangamandira, JC Road. The event is open to all.

CITYBEATS

Tasty wicket

ONGOING
Nusa Brewvilla has come up with a special menu for the IPL season. Mozzarella fritters, cheese fondue, bread sticks and more, are a part of this exciting menu. The food will be available till May 26 with prices starting from ₹345 onwards.
At Nusa Brewvilla, Gunjur Village. Call 099165 55499.

Tricks and treats

APRIL 29
Bira 91 Taproom will host the Bengaluru Pupper Party. Organised in partnership with Pet Fed India, the event celebrates pets and human relations. With fun and games, there will be complimentary health check-ups for all the dogs. On from 3pm to 6pm.
Visit petfed.org for details and tickets.

Well-versed

APRIL 26
Atta Galatta presents "Let Poetry Be", an open mic night, which will be hosted by Neha Kirpalani. Neha will share her insights, adding depth to her verses and crafting meaningful conversations across boundaries. Entry is free. To read your poem, e-mail nehakirpalani@gmail.com.
At Atta Galatta, Indiranagar, 5.30pm

Modi an existential threat to India's plurality, says Kharge

(From left) Congress leader V.D. Satheesan, party chief Mallikarjun Kharge and candidates for the Lok Sabha election Shashi Tharoor and Adoor Prakash during a function on Wednesday. PTI

G. Anand
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge seems hesitant to identify the Left Democratic Front (LDF), an INDIA bloc partner at the national level, as the Congress' main rival in the State.

At a press conference at the Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee (KPCC) headquarters here on Wednesday, Mr. Kharge focused his party's ire on Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his the latter's Sangh Parivar brand of "muscular Hindu majoritarian nationalism and anti-Muslim politics." Mr. Kharge portrayed Mr. Modi as "an existential threat to India's plurality, secular Constitution, communal harmony and democracy."

He sidestepped questions on the alleged differences between the two partners in the INDIA bloc and their sparring in Kerala. He reaffirmed the INDIA bloc's political relevance as a national-level anti-BJP platform, wherein regional secular forces adopted varied strategies to disadvantage the BJP. For one, in some non-BJP-ruled States, INDIA bloc allies fought each other to deny the Sangh Parivar any anti-incumbency advantage. In others, they collaborated.

Mr. Kharge accused Mr. Modi of dangerously breaking tradition with past Prime Ministers by terming Indian Muslims "infiltrators out to steal the nation's wealth, including the gold ornaments of mothers and sisters".

Mr. Modi resorted to incendiary rhetoric and invoked religion to divert public attention away from institutionalised corruption, unemployment, inflation, cost of living crisis, abject poverty, the yawning rich-poor divide and corporate appeasement. He said Mr. Modi had systematically subverted Constitutional bodies, including the Election Commission, by posting acolytes he could easily bend to his will.

Muslim OBC quota: NCBC to summon Karnataka CS

Officials of the National Commission for Backward Classes said that the State government had not been providing full information as sought by the panel

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

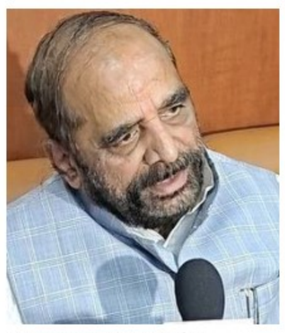
National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) Chairperson Hansraj Gangaram Ahir on Wednesday said it is going to summon the Chief Secretary of the Karnataka government over the State's categorisation of the Other Backward Classes (OBC) quota, which provides for "blanket reservation" to Muslims under Category II-B.

The statement has come when 14 constituencies in Karnataka are scheduled to vote in the Lok Sabha election on Friday.

Mr. Ahir said the Commission has been evaluating OBC reservations in Karnataka and in its correspondence with the State government it found that it listed Muslims under Category II-B of the OBC categorisation.

"This happened to be in addition to the 17 Muslim castes in Category I and 19 Muslim castes in Category II-A. We understand that there are many castes within Muslims that need to be included in the OBC category. However, we do not understand why there is a separate category just for Muslims," Mr. Ahir told *The Hindu*, adding that the State's replies in this regard were not satisfactory.

Officials of the commission said the Karnataka government had not been providing full information as sought by the NCBC.



Hansraj Gangaram Ahir

In February, the Karnataka government had justified the presence of Muslims under Category II-B in a letter to the NCBC. In the letter, the State government clarified that for this purpose, they are considering Muslims and Christians as neither caste nor religion but as backward classes, as recommended by various commissions formed by the State government.

Questioning validity

However, Mr. Ahir questioned the validity of the reports based on which the entire Muslim community had been declared as backward in the State.

"The State government is yet to provide a full report of a current survey that supports the classification of Muslims as backward," he said, adding that the commission is looking to examine these reports. The NCBC went on to cite postgraduate medical admissions in Karnataka in 2021-22 and 2022-23 to assert that Muslims in the State were being "over-represented" because of such a categorisation within the OBC quota, which Mr. Ahir said "is eating into the share that should be available to other OBC communities, including Muslims".

The NCBC Chairperson, who had last year raised a similar problem with the OBC list of West Bengal, said, "In Bengal too, a majority of the communities included in the OBC list happen to be Muslim. How is that possible?"

Mr. Ahir said the problem could be further compounded because a lot of these communities would want to be included in the Central list as well. "So, we have to make sure that they belong in this category and that requires current survey reports."

The commission has also flagged concerns that Karnataka's OBC categorisation allows for all Muslims to contest from any OBC or General category seat in local body elections, which is feared to be depriving other deserving OBC communities the space to do so.

CM takes on PM's quota remark

The Hindu Bureau
BENGALURU

Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday said that it was the "ignorance" of Prime Minister Narendra Modi that he was stating a lie that Congress was trying to provide reservation to Muslims at the cost of SCs/backward classes.

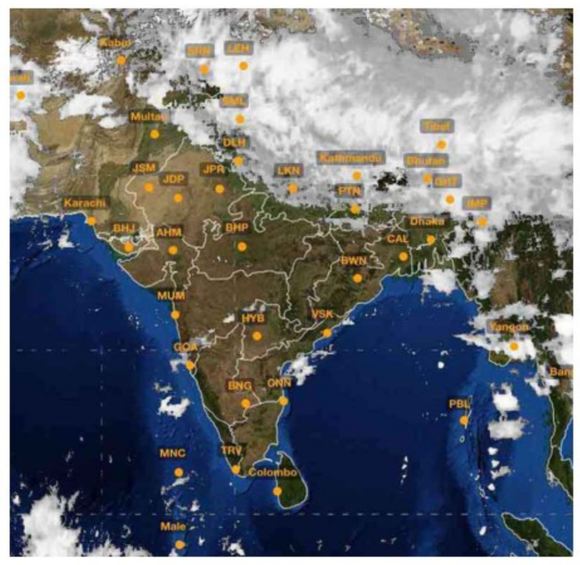
In a release, he said that in Karnataka Muslims are part of 2B in backward classes reservation based on Chinnappa Reddy Commission recommendation. "The reservation has been there for the past three decades. No one, including the BJP, has questioned this in court. The Prime Minister seems to have forgotten the rap by the Supreme Court to the Basavaraj Bommai government that tried to tinker with it for dividing votes on communal lines. The court has struck down dividing 4 % reservation of Muslims among Vokkaligas and Lingayats. Unfortunately, this is not in his knowledge."

The Chief Minister also sought to know the opinion of former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda, who claims to have given reservation to Muslims, on the issue.

Mr. Siddaramaiah said, "Where has Congress promised to provide reservation to Muslims at the cost of SCs/OBCs? In which Congress-ruled State has it been done? The reservation can be provided only according to Constitution and based on socio-economic survey."

WEATHERWATCH

Rainfall, temperature & air quality in select metros yesterday



TEMPERATURE DATA: IMD, POLLUTION DATA: CPCB, MAP: INSAT/IMD (TAKEN AT 18.00 HRS)

Forecast for Thursday: Thunderstorm with lightning/gusty winds likely at isolated places over Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Sikkim, Madhya Pradesh and Kerala. Heat wave conditions likely in isolated pockets over Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, Telangana, coastal Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Puducherry and coastal Karnataka

CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN	CITY	RAIN	MAX	MIN
Agartala	—	38.0	27.4	Kozhikode	—	37.4	29.4
Ahmedabad	—	40.8	26.6	Kurnool	—	43.1	29.1
Aizawl	—	—	21.1	Lucknow	—	39.8	23.3
Allahabad	—	42.4	24.2	Madurai	—	39.6	26.7
Bengaluru	—	37.0	23.4	Mangaluru	—	34.9	27.8
Bhopal	—	39.3	22.9	Mumbai	—	34.2	25.6
Bhubaneswar	1.6	43.2	26.1	Mysuru	—	36.0	23.0
Chandigarh	—	35.5	18.0	New Delhi	2	37.5	19.0
Chennai	—	38.7	25.4	Patna	—	40.7	28.0
Coimbatore	—	38.8	25.4	Port Blair	—	34.1	26.3
Dehradun	—	35.0	17.5	Puducherry	—	35.8	26.3
Gangtok	—	24.1	15.8	Pune	—	38.6	24.7
Goa	—	33.8	25.5	Raipur	—	39.9	24.4
Guwahati	—	37.8	23.0	Ranchi	—	37.4	23.4
Hubballi	—	38.0	24.0	Shillong	—	27.1	16.0
Hyderabad	—	39.9	26.6	Shimla	—	26.5	14.8
Imphal	1	31.3	18.1	Srinagar	—	24.0	7.0
Jaipur	—	38.6	24.2	Thiruvananthapuram	5	34.9	25.4
Kochi	—	33.0	28.0	Tiruchi	—	40.5	27.0
Kohima	—	29.0	18.4	Vijayawada	—	42.0	26.0
Kolkata	—	40.5	29.0	Visakhapatnam	—	34.6	28.0

(Rainfall data in mm; temperature in Celsius)

Pollutants in the air you are breathing

CITIES	SO_2	NO_2	CO	PM2.5	PM10	CODE
Ahmedabad	.13	..39	.35	...130	...126	
Bengaluru	.10	..17	.25	...124	...117	
Chennai	...6	...9	.96	54	54	
Delhi	.19	..69	.36	...185	...214	
Hyderabad	.26	..42	.16	72	...109	
Kolkata	.27	..20	.74	72	91	
Lucknow	...3	..46	.24	...216	...148	
Mumbai	.23	..47	.66	...262	...162	
Pune	.86	100	116	96	93	
Visakhapatnam	.12	..52	.24	82	...118	

Yesterday

In observation made at 4.00 p.m., Nalbari, Assam recorded an overall air quality index (AQI) score of 249 indicating an unhealthy level of pollution. In contrast, Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh recorded a healthy AQI score of 27

Air Quality Code: Poor Moderate Good (Readings indicate average AQI)

SO_2: Sulphur Dioxide. Short-term exposure can harm the respiratory system, making breathing difficult. It can affect visibility by reacting with other air particles to form haze and stain culturally important objects such as statues and monuments.

NO_2: Nitrogen Dioxide. Aggravates respiratory illness, causes haze to form by reacting with other air particles, causes acid rain, pollutes coastal waters.

CO: Carbon monoxide. High concentration in air reduces oxygen supply to critical organs like the heart and brain. At very high levels, it can cause dizziness, confusion, unconsciousness and even death.

PM2.5 & PM10: Particulate matter pollution can cause irritation of the eyes, nose and throat, coughing, chest tightness and shortness of breath, reduced lung function, irregular heartbeat, asthma attacks, heart attacks and premature death in people with heart or lung disease

BUSINESS CONNECT

A Business Initiative

Titan Unveils New Collection of Ceramic Fusion Automatic Watches

Titan introduces new watches to its Ceramic Fusion Automatics collection, where sophistication seamlessly meets innovation. With a firm focus on Automatics this year, this collection marks a significant milestone as the brand combines two of its strongest lines of expertise - ceramic build and in-house automatic movement to launch a fresh new blend of designs. This collection not only showcases Titan's dedication to craftsmanship but also introduces ceramic fusion with an in-house automatic caliber. The Ceramic Fusion Automatics Watch collection blends the unique features of ceramic–durability, scratch resistance, lightweight feel, hypoallergenic properties, and a range of color options–with their proprietary automatic movement. sec to +30 sec/day accuracy and a robust 36-hour power reserve. The skeletal dial face elegantly showcases the intricate automatic movement, while the dual-tone solid link stainless steel and ceramic bracelet embodies refined aesthetics. With a domed crystal and options of concave dial as well as square case, this collection introduces a touch of modern charm, creating a versatile timepiece that effortlessly transitions from day to night–a perfect fusion of automatic mastery and chic ceramic allure. Designed for the discerning men with a taste for the exquisite and unique, each timepiece in this collection represents more than just a reliable accessory; it encapsulates a statement–a fusion of design, technology, and timeless elegance. The Ceramic Fusion Automatics Watch collection is paving way for a year filled with exciting line-up of automatic watches. With the collection available across Titan Stores and on www.titan.co.in, stay tuned as the brand continues to unveil more captivating designs, each a testament to unwavering commitment to excellence in watchmaking. Experience the fusion of craftsmanship and precision to witness the symbiosis of automatics with ceramic elegance.

Bharat Electronics Ltd (BEL) signs MoU with Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Mandi

Navratna Defence PSU BEL has signed an MoU with the Indian Institute of Technology, Mandi, Himachal Pradesh, for co-operation in Research and Technology/Product Development – in the areas of Semiconductors, Quantum Technologies and Drones. The MoU aims at leveraging the complementary strengths and capabilities of BEL and IIT-Mandi. It will support indigenisation of products/solutions being supplied by BEL to its customers and is in line with the GOI's 'Make in India' initiative. BEL is a premier electronics company engaged inter alia in the design, development and manufac-ture of professional-grade electronic equipment, systems, sub-systems and modules in the areas of Communications, Electro-Optics, Electronic Warfare, Radars, Satcom, Telecommu-nications and Networking, Solar Photovoltaic, Strategic Electronic Components and civilian. BEL is working in the fields of IoT, Cloud Computing, Big Data Analytics, Network Manage-ment Systems, Artificial Intelligence, Smart Cities, Mission Critical Communication, large networks solution, Telecom and switching products, Unmanned Systems, Quantum tech-nologies, etc. IIT Mandi (iitmandi.ac.in) is one among the eight, newer, second generation IITs. It is a research university located in Kamand Valley, Mandi city, Mandi district of Himachal Pradesh. Established in 2009, IIT-Mandi has in the last 15 years developed good infrastructure to foster quality research in the fields of science and engineering.

Awareness programme on Women Cancers arranged by Canara Bank, Regional Office, Bengaluru West

Recently Canara Bank, Regional Office, Bengaluru West in association with Dr. Narasimhaiah Srinivasaiah, Senior Consultant, Colorectal Surgeon at Apollo Hospitals and the Malleswaram Ladies Association Academy of Higher Learning has arranged for an Awareness programme on Women Cancers under the topic "Longevity: a Boon or a Bane - an Outlook to Women's Health & Female Cancers. The programme was held at the R R Auditorium of Malleshwaram Ladies Association Academy of Higher Learning. More than 300 women participated in the event. Dr. Narasimhaiah Srinivasaiah gave a detailed presentation on Breast Cancer, Cervical Cancer and Ovarian Cancer amongst others. The doctor clarified doubts of the participants in a detailed Q&A session. Thereafter, 'CANARA ANGEL', an innovative and industry first savings bank account product launched by Canara Bank was explained to the participants. The Savings product launched by the Bank consists of three variants namely Lavender, Rose and Orchid and they are covered under Cancer Care Health Insurance of Rs. 3 Lakh, Rs. 5 Lakh and Rs.10 Lakh respectively. In addition to the Personal Accidental Insurance cover of Rs.8 Lakh, Rs.16 Lakh and Rs.26 Lakh, other scheme features were also explained. The programme was chaired by Sri Mahesh M Pai, General Manager of Bengaluru Circle and co-chaired by Smt Muthulakshmi P, Deputy General Manager, Bengaluru West Regional Office and Smt. Lakshmi V, Honorary Secretary, Malleswaram Ladies Association Academy of Higher Learning was the Guest of Honour for the programme.

SOUTH WESTERN RAILWAY

Tender notice No. 15/2024 Dated: 19.04.2024
The undersigned on behalf of the President of India, invites E-Tender through IREPS only for supply of following items:

Description in brief: Traction Transformer complete with accessories as per approved GA drawing of ICF suitable for 3-PHASE MEMU propulsion system as per RDSO specification no. RDSO/PE/SPEC/EMU/0096-2008 (rev 4 or latest) for 3-Phase MEMU DMCs
(Tender Notice No. L8249001) (Qty: 04 Nos)

Last date for submission of bids:
Up to 10:30 hrs. of 13.05.2024

For details log on: www.ireps.gov.in

Senior Divisional Materials Manager
Bengaluru

PUB/31/AAV/PRB/SWR/2024-25
South Western Railway-SWR SWRRLY SWRRLY

EAST COAST RAILWAY

Tender Notice No.:
FOB_VZM_CHE_AMRIT_BHARAT, Dtd.: 16.04.2024
Name of Work : S & T PORTION OF WORK IN CONNECTION WITH PROVISION OF 12 M WIDE FOBS AT VZM, CPP, CHE, NWP & PLH STATIONS UNDER AMRIT BHARAT SCHEME.
Advertised Value: Rs.59,35,933/-, EMD: Rs.1,18,700/-
Completion of Period: 12 Months

Tender Notice No.:
SANDT-WAT-CAMC_VDRPU_8CHL, Dtd.: 17.04.2024
Name of Work : COMPREHENSIVE ANNUAL MAINTENANCE CONTRACT FOR 8 CHANNEL VOICE DATA RECORDING AND PROCESSING UNIT (VDRPU) INSTALLED IN TELECOM TEST ROOM FOR A PERIOD OF 03 (THREE) YEARS AT WALTAIR DIVN.
Advertised Value: Rs.2,33,280/-, EMD: Rs.4,700/-
Completion of Period: 36 Months
Tender closing Date & Time: At 1500 hrs. on 08.05.2024 (For all tenders)
The Tender documents complete details available at www.ireps.gov.in
Divl. Railway Manager(S&T)
Waltair
PR-41/P/24-25

PUBLIC NOTICE

This is to inform to the General public/ Whomsoever it may concern that my client **Sri. Shiva S/o Mallaiah,** R/at No. 29, Tokinayakana Doddi, Marale Bekuppe Post, Kanakapura Taluk, Ramanagara District. Intend/Propose to purchase the schedule property belongs to **Smt. N. Chandrakala** W/o N.Ramesh, R/at No. 16, 10th Main, 10th Cross near Harsha School, Jaraganahalli, Bengaluru-78 represent that she is the absolute owner and having clear and marketable title to the schedule property. Any Person/s, Institution Including Financial Institution, societies claiming to have any right/ title/ interest/ claims or enforceable right in the schedule property either as the owner or in any other manner of objection for such alienation may lodge your objections with documentary proof within **7 days** from the date of publication of this notice, with the undersigned advocate, failing which it will be presumed that no valid claims and objections subsist and thereafter my client shall proceed to complete the sale transaction with owner referred to above.

-: SCHEDULE PROPERTY: -

All that piece and parcel of the House property bearing **No.16,** katha No. 5/2 carved out of Sy No.5/2, BBMP property No. 5-2/16 situated at **Yelachenahalli Village, Uttarahalli Hobli, Bengaluru South Taluk,** presently fell under BBMP ward No. 185, measuring East to West 40 feet and North to South 30 feet in all measuring **1200 square feet** with ground + 3 floors RCC residential building.

V. VIJAYASHEKARA GOWDA,
ADVOCATE and Solicitor
No. 1, 2nd floor, 10th cross, Cubbonpet Main Road, Cubbonpet, Bengaluru-560002,
Mobile: 9341227183,
email id: vvsggowda@gmail.com.

THE HINDU GROUP

As the youngest voters this Lok Sabha Election, we solemnly swear we do not think the sun rises in the west, money grows on trees, 'the south' is a single state or that the Parliament is a club.

Since everyone thinks we need to be told what we already know, we thought it was best to clarify.

Yes, we know we must vote.
See you at the polls on April 26.

THE HINDU

Express your voting spirit!
Scan, snap, and post with
#SeeYouAtThePolls

The next time you see an ad that states the obvious and reminds you of your civic responsibility, just comment **#SeeYouAtThePolls**.

Surat symptoms

The BJP is resorting to the foulest means to eliminate any opposition

A malady that enfeebles Indian democracy – the elimination of contest, at the level of ideas, and political mobilisation – got a geographical tag in Surat, where the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) candidate has been declared elected unopposed to the Lok Sabha. Democracy without an Opposition ceases to be one, but the ruling BJP has declared it as an objective in its slogan, a Congress-less India. Such an intent is in itself authoritarian, even if pursued through fair electoral means. What unfolded in Surat is far from fair: it was the foulest of tactics outside of any electoral play book. Signatories of Congress candidate Nilesh Kumbhani's nomination papers declared on affidavit that their signatures were forged. All political parties routinely field a dummy candidate to deal with the unlikely event of the primary candidate's death or rejection of nomination papers. In Surat, Suresh Padsala, who was fielded by the Congress as dummy, also had his nomination papers rejected after one of his proposers declared on affidavit that his signature too was forged. Eight other candidates withdrew their nominations, leaving the BJP candidate, Mukesh Dalal, as the only one standing. He was promptly declared the winner on April 22 by the Surat District Collector and also returning officer, and the BJP began celebrations. If at all the unopposed election of the BJP candidate signifies an absolute consensus among Surat's nearly 17 lakh voters, it is a silence that speaks loudly about a serious illness in India's democracy.

This elimination of contest through the misuse of state power, money, and misinformation has become a major threat to Indian democracy. Another candidate picked by the Congress in Gujarat not only left the party but also joined the BJP within a few days. Mr. Kumbhani's proposers were his brother-in-law, nephew and a business partner, and the story of their forged signatures does not sit well in a functioning democracy. Mr. Kumbhani is not protesting either. He has gone incommunicado. Early this year, an election officer himself tampered with the ballot to declare the BJP candidate the winner in the Chandigarh mayoral election – a result which was overturned by the Supreme Court of India. It is unlikely that the contest would have been close in Surat, had it happened. The BJP had won the seat with massive margins in all Lok Sabha elections since 1989. Therefore, the point about the uncontested election of Mr. Dalal is the extermination of the Opposition rather than about his own victory. Contestations of ideas and their synergies over centuries have made India hospitable for democracy. The BJP needs to evolve a political culture in which disagreements with opponents are negotiated through fair contests.

Hot button

Voters must be incentivised by minimising risks due to heat exposure

The Election Commission of India (ECI) suspects ambient heat dissuaded voters from turning out in greater numbers during the first phase of the general election, on April 19. It has since constituted a task force with representatives from itself, the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, and the National Disaster Management Authority to assess local heat and humidity for five days before each phase of polling and work with State electoral apparatuses to ensure adequate facilities at booths. The IMD declares heat wave conditions in a region depending on whether one of a few conditions is met, centred on deviations of the daytime temperature from the decade-long average. But these declarations are not concerned with the people's experience of ambient heat. Even without a heat wave, people of all ages are at significant risk if the relative humidity increases the wet-bulb temperature beyond 30° C and they spend more than a few minutes outdoors. Heat can also accumulate and persist in some locations more than others. For example, semi-planned or unplanned areas can exacerbate the risk of heat stress through poor ventilation, crowding, not installing shaded resting spots, and overlooking heat radiated by asphalt surfaces.

Getting more people to vote is like getting more children to school, which the midday meal scheme contributed significantly to. The ECI would do well to implement similar measures to incentivise voting by minimising heat exposure. The physiological adversity a voter may suffer when commuting between home and polling booth can be controlled to a limited extent by tweaking the polling dates and hours. (In the same vein, rescheduling the elections to non-summer months may spare voters the heat but not the wrath of some other elements.) The task force must ensure every booth has shaded waiting areas with seating; air flow; oral rehydration options; sanitary facilities; fruits; updated first-aid kits; wheelchairs; accessible architecture; and medical services every dozen booths or so. Some additional needs go beyond the task force. For example, the ECI's pledge to increase voters' awareness of heat management protocols and provisions at booths should not encroach on the duties or resources of the Accredited Social Health Activists, and must instead bank on a separate cadre. The Health Ministry must also collect and share data about heat-related morbidity and mortality as well as reconcile its numbers with those of the National Crime Records Bureau, so that officials can identify problems and institute reliable long-term countermeasures.

The conflict, from Nebuchadnezzar to Netanyahu

Mahesh Sachdev

is a former Indian Ambassador and a West Asia expert

The ghost of Assyrian king Nebuchadnezzar (642-562 BC) would have probably gleefully approved of the recent first-ever direct projectile exchanges between Iran and Israel. After all, he sowed the seeds of this historic animosity in 586 BC by destroying the first Jewish temple, sacking the Jewish kingdom of Judea and taking its citizens in captivity to Babylonia. Jewish scripture Jeremiah described Nebuchadnezzar as the "Destroyer of Nations".

A long enmity

While much water has flown down the Nile during the tumultuous regional history, the Jew-Persia enmity has survived 26 centuries; barring last century's Pahlavi era in Iran when the two non-Arab, pro-American states had a tactical alliance. But the advent of the Islamic Republic in 1979 restored the historic "normalcy", and the Mullahs in Tehran have been unswerving in denouncing Israel as "smaller Satan" and vowing its destruction. To this end, Iran has pursued weapons of mass destruction capacity, including drones, missiles and nuclear weapons. Leaders of Israel, the region's only putative nuclear weapon state, consider Iran an "existential threat" and have vowed to never allow Iran to acquire nuclear weapons.

Till this month, the two confined their ill-concealed hostility to shadow boxing. Iran has backed non-state proxies such as Hezbollah, the Houthis and Hamas which have become a pernicious threat to Israel's security while providing Tehran the fig leaf of deniability. Israel too has waged a determined campaign against them. It has also been engaged in undeclared air and missile operations against Iranian and Hezbollah presence in Syria and has tried to sabotage Iran's nuclear programme. A precarious strategic dynamic had come into place - until an unacknowledged airstrike on April 1, suspected by Israel, on the Iranian embassy compound in Damascus, killing seven Iranians, including two generals. Iran retaliated on April 13 with over 300 drones and missiles on the Israeli targets, Israel claimed that 99% of the Iranian projectiles were shot down. In an unacknowledged tit-for-tat five days later, Israel hit the Isfahan airbase in central Iran with drones and a missile. This first direct confrontation between the two long-sworn enemies appeared designed by each to declare victory to their respective domestic audience. However, they have set a "new normal", with dangerous portents.

Several historical, religious and geopolitical factors have sharpened Israel-Iran hostility. Four centuries of crusades widened this divide. Unlike Europe where Jews were often persecuted, small Jewish communities ("Mizrahi") lived amicably among Arabs from Morocco to Iran, albeit with ghetto-based existence often confining them to trades such as money-lending and jewellery-making. The Zionist movement since 1897 urged the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine and the Balfour Declaration provided it a quasi-formal commitment. As a larger number of occidental Jews ("Sephardim") migrated to Palestine under a British mandate, terrorism by Jewish gangs such as Stern and Irgun sought to push out the local Arabs. The Nazi holocaust of Jews during World War Two accelerated the exodus of the Sephardim to Palestine.

> Several historical, religious and geopolitical factors have sharpened the Jewish-Persian conflict, which can impact India's 'act west' policy if it flares up

In 1947, the United Nations adopted a resolution to partition Palestine. While the state of Israel was created, for various reasons, the intended Arab state of Palestine and the neutral city of Jerusalem could not be formed. In 1967, Israel defeated Arab armies and occupied Jerusalem, West Bank and Gaza which have largely been under its control since. Worldwide demand for a "two-state solution" has been gaining momentum. While Arab states have largely paid lip service to the "Palestine Cause", Iran has been more vocal and strident. It created the anti-Israel "axis of resistance" comprising Hamas, Hezbollah and Houthis, sustaining them with weapons and money. It has created an elite Quds (Jerusalem) Force to support them. Much of its military preparedness and nuclear programme has been Israel-centric.

Although Islam initially regarded Jews as "People of the Book", their perceived duplicity later cast them in a negative hue. An epic Muslim victory over a Jewish army at Khayber near Madinah in 628 AD, set a new hostile historic benchmark. Even today, the Arab anti-Israeli demonstrators can often be seen chanting in Arabic "*Khaybar Khaybar yā Yahūd, jaish Muammad sauf ya'ūd*" ("Khaybar, Khaybar O Jews, Muhammad's army shall return"). Last year, Iran unveiled "Khaybar" a 2,000-km range missile capable of hitting Israel. Most Iranians are Shia and Iran has sought to foster loyalties among Shias of Lebanon, Yemen, Bahrain, Iraq, Syria and even South Asia.

The plans by Iran and Israel

At a geo-political level, Iran also seeks to appeal to the global one billion-strong Muslim Ummah by playing up the emotive Palestine Cause. Tehran seeks to create a cleavage between Muslims in the street, who are pro-Palestine, and moderate Arab regimes seeking a non-disruptive political solution to the problem. The moderate Arab regimes resent Tehran's one-upmanship and aggressiveness of its non-state proxies. Since 2020, the United States has tried to create an anti-Iran "Abraham Accord" alliance comprising some moderate Arab states and Israel. Some observers believe that the Hamas attack of October 7 was meant to disrupt the regional heavy-weight Saudi Arabia joining this alliance.

With that short backdrop, we can now analyse the strategic motives of Iran and Israel in the current conflict. Iran believes that it needs more time as it is still short of a nuclear weapon capability. To buy more time, Tehran wishes to bleed Israel into wars of attrition with its proxies while avoiding a frontal conflict. Israel, on the other hand, a much smaller country with a small standing army, aims to wage short swift wars leveraging the state-of-art U.S. armaments designed to maintain regional superiority. Barring the West Bank (which it considers the Judea), Jerusalem (site of the Jewish temple) and the Golan Heights overlooking Syria, it professes no territorial ambitions. Israel vacated Gaza in 2005 to avoid human costs and is currently waging a no-holds-barred war against Hamas to avenge the October 7 monstrosity.

Arab and Muslim regimes feel uncomfortable with the horrible death and devastation in Gaza during the seven-month-long Israeli invasion. They also fear being sucked into a war in which Iran, unable to inflict pain on the two Satans, could turn to their regional cahoots. They also fear that the resultant regional instability would disrupt oil production, their economic mainstay. While flaunting their strategic autonomy, they know their vulnerabilities and are clutching at various straws in the wind. The Saudi Foreign Minister's dash to Islamabad on April 15 was likely to have been prompted by the need to enlist Pakistan for the Kingdom's security. Similar motivations seem to be at work with Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi wrapping up his three-day state visit to Pakistan on April 24.

Potential impact on India

An open conflict between Israel and Iran would impact Prime Minister Narendra Modi's energetic "act west" policy. Apart from an expected oil price surge, it would create insecurity for over nine million Indian expatriates in West Asia remitting around $40 billion annually. It would also dent the prospects for carefully laid down multilateral architecture such as I2U2 (India, Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and the U.S.) and the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor.

Last, but not least, with a large Muslim community and the third-highest Shia population after Iran and Pakistan, such a conflict may have domestic ramifications for India. All reasons enough for India to intensify its prayers that a direct Iran-Israel conflict is avoided and Nebuchadnezzar and Khaybar remain confined to history books.

The Indian seafarer deserves better in choppy high seas

K.M. Seethi

an Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) Senior Fellow, is Director, Inter University Centre for Social Science Research and Extension (IUCSSRE), Mahatma Gandhi University (MGU), Kerala. He was Senior Professor of International Relations and Dean of Social Sciences at the MGU

Amid rising safety concerns among Indian seafarers following the recent attacks on commercial ships in sensitive geographical areas such as the Red Sea and the Strait of Hormuz, India submitted three papers to the 111th Session of the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) Legal Committee (LEG), which is from April 22 to 26, 2024. These submissions address crucial issues such as seafarers' security, contract terms, and broader maritime security challenges. India has stressed the need for a comprehensive approach to maritime security and advocated improved contractual conditions for seafarers. While acknowledging the IMO's efforts to combat maritime fraud, India has called for broader international cooperation to tackle various maritime threats, including piracy, armed robbery, extremist attacks, regional conflicts, and emerging risks such as drone attacks and the use of maritime weapons.

Sea piracy is back

Recent pirate attacks off the coast of Somalia, including hijackings, suggest a resurgence of piracy. In December 2023 and January 2024, Somali pirates targeted vessels such as the *MV Ruen* and *MV Lila Norfolk*. India has called for vigilance, proactive measures, and international cooperation to combat piracy and protect seafarers, in line with the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

India has also highlighted the impact of unlawful recruitment practices on seafarers' well-being and international trade. Since 2020, over 200 cases of seafarer exploitation have been reported to the Indian Maritime Administration. India has urged international coordination to address these issues and ensure seafarers' rights under the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006.

The maritime industry, vital for global trade, depends heavily on seafarers who often face challenges and risks.

India, with 9.35% of global seafarers and ranking third globally, confronts these issues, evident from recent incidents such as the seizure of *MSC Aries* and the detention of *MT Heroic Idun* at Nigeria (this last case went on for several months).

> With Indians playing a significant role in keeping the global shipping industry running, their welfare and safety acquires significance

These events highlight the vulnerabilities of Indian seafarers, catalogued by a survey, showing how a majority lacked legal representation, felt unfairly treated, and were unaware of their rights. India has submitted papers to the IMO's Legal Committee, which emphasise seafarers' security and contract terms. Yet, enhanced international cooperation is needed to safeguard seafarers and ensure uninterrupted navigation, especially amid rising incidents involving Indian seafarers and geopolitical tensions.

Three years ago, the Maritime Union of India highlighted a 40% increase in kidnappings in the Gulf of Guinea, with 134 cases of assault, injury, and threats reported. Incidents such as the kidnapping of 20 Indian nationals from the *MT Duke* (off the western coast of Africa) and the ship owners paying hefty ransoms highlight the dangers faced by seafarers.

An Indian initiative on rights

In response, the Indian government and the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) launched the 'human rights at sea' initiative. Reports reveal cases of seafarers being held in foreign jails, stranded in foreign waters, and subjected to illegal detentions. 'Human Rights at Sea' has highlighted abuses against Indian seafarers, including 200 held in foreign jails and 65 stranded in Indonesia for 151 days. The NHRC has highlighted the challenges of holding ship owners accountable for violations against Indian seafarers operating under foreign registrations to evade taxes and has stressed the need for proactive cooperation among stakeholders and mechanisms to protect human rights in the maritime industry.

Maritime piracy is a growing concern for Indian seafarers. With around 2,50,000 Indian seafarers serving on specialised cargo vessels worldwide, recent data from the International Maritime Bureau show a more than 10% increase in serious piracy incidents over the last 10 months. Armed pirates have boarded nearly 90% of targeted cargo ships, endangering seafarers.

Addressing piracy requires a comprehensive land-based solution. While private guards on merchant navy ships can deter piracy, the volatile nature of piracy-prone oceans poses challenges, as highlighted by Bjorn Hojgaard, CEO of Anglo-Eastern Univan Group, a major employer of Indian seafarers.

Further, reports suggest that Iranian shipping companies, in collaboration with international recruiters, exploit Indian seafarers by luring them with false promises of high salaries and opportunities in the Middle East. These seafarers often face overwork, are provided insufficient food, and are forced into transporting illegal cargo, despite paying hefty fees to secure overseas jobs.

Seafarers need support

Despite these risks, many Indian seafarers remain committed to their careers at sea, which makes it imperative to have improved rights and protection. Currently representing 9.35% of the global seafaring population, India aims to increase its share to 20% in the next 10 to 20 years, with ship management companies playing a crucial role.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Indian seafarers demonstrated their resilience and professionalism, enhancing India's standing in the global maritime market. The Ukraine-Russia conflict has also created opportunities for new players in the Indian maritime sector.

Recent attacks on commercial ships have heightened safety concerns among Indian seafarers, with some considering quitting their jobs due to security fears. This underlines the urgent need for government support and enhanced protection measures.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Campaign trail, politics

It appears that the Bharatiya Janata Party's lofty goal of 'crossing 400 seats' in the ongoing general elections is facing hurdles. This can be read in the silence after much chest thumping. The rhetoric has now moved to tapping religious narratives. The lowest point was in conveniently interpreting the Congress party's manifesto on income distribution and inequality. It is surprising to have the Prime Minister of India stoop so low.

Soundarrajan,
Chennai

There may be many who are criticising the Prime Minister for his recent speech in Rajasthan by terming it as hate towards a particular religion. But the Congress and its allies seem to have conveniently forgotten that they have been the pioneers in using the caste and religion tag. It is unfortunate that our political leaders are stooping so low in order to divide the people for their own benefits. This needs to be condemned and the only way is to vote wisely.

A.P. Thiruvadi,
Chennai

As a senior citizen aged 92, I long to see a newly elected government at the Centre which has Cabinet Ministers are honest and straightforward in their dealings and transactions. Voters should think twice before exercising their franchise. I hope all voters have my sincere plea in mind.

Mani Nataraajan,
Chennai

At Chepauk

If Ruturaj Gaikwad showed what power-hitting is all about, Marcus Stoinis showed that savage-hitting can do the trick ('Sport' page, April 24). He scored his runs with utmost ease and in style. His progressive decimation of CSK's bowling attack once again underscored the need to clear the boundary on a regular basis. He is an abundantly gifted player who may not suit Test cricket but is an essential member of any squad in the shorter formats of the game. One feels sorry for the yellow supporters who left the ground in total disbelief. I wish to see a few more match-winning knocks from this Australian powerhouse.

V. Lakshmanan,
Tirupur, Tamil Nadu

The reality of the Swacch Bharat Mission

Tikender Singh Panwar

is a former directly elected Deputy Mayor of Shimla and an urban practitioner

India was ranked right at the bottom of 180 countries in the Environment Performance Index (EPI) in 2022. The EPI ranks countries on climate change performance, environmental health, and ecosystem vitality. It measures 40 performance indicators across 11 issue categories, such as air quality, and drinking water and sanitation. The government responded to the rank saying the methodology is faulty and does not quantify the Indian scenario objectively.

For 10 years, the Modi government has embarked on much-hyped campaigns of development. These included the Swacch Bharat Mission, the Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation, the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, and the National Clean Air Programme.

Is the EPI linked to these missions? It should be, because these missions aim to enable better living standards. The SBM is meant to address the issue of WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Health). Likewise, the SCM is supposed to deliver on the clean energy requirements of towns. However, what we have seen is an increase in the vulnerability of the population owing to air and water pollution, among others.

The Swachh Bharat Mission

So, what went wrong? Let us take the example of the SBM and SBM 2.0, which was launched in 2021 and which aims to make all cities free of garbage. Sanitation and waste management in India are associated with the wide prevalence of caste. Historically, the subjugated castes have been forced to carry out sanitation work. The SBM tried to create a narrative that sanitation is everyone's job. Instead, it has ended up continuing the same old caste practices.

The SBM is a politically successful project; no Opposition party or community has raised objections to it. While the entire project is governed and monitored by state agencies, the design makes it clear that large capital-intensive technologies are promoted.

The Union government claims that India is open defecation-free, but the reality is different. A Comptroller and Auditor General report in 2020 raised many questions about the government's claims over the success of the SBM on this front. It indicated the poor quality of construction of toilets under this scheme. A few urbanisation studies pointed out that in some metros, communities in slums still do not have access to public toilets. Even in rural India, toilet construction has not been linked to waste treatment. In peri-urban areas, the faecal sludge generated is tossed into the environment. Septic tanks are cleaned by manual scavengers and the sludge is thrown into various water systems.

One thing the government intended to do via SBM was to reduce the involvement of people in waste management by replacing them with large, capital-intensive technologies. However, these installations have refused to live up to their promoters' promises, leaving town after town screaming for resources to fix them and, importantly, respond to the health crises emerging from badly managed waste (if at all) as well as the rates and forms of urbanisation local governments believed these technologies would support. In this scenario, the governments outsourced most of the work to private players, who employed the same subjugated communities to handle waste.

Take, for example, solid and liquid waste management in cities. In most towns, the Union government is employing technological solutions in handling solid waste. Some of these solutions are in the form of waste-to-energy plants and biological methanation. But there are barely any success stories in either case.

City governments are being asked to buy more machines including road sweeping machines that cost no less than ₹1 crore, more vehicles to transport the waste from one corner to another with geo-tagging, and so on. Funds are made available to the city governments for such plans. However, all this work is being handed over to large contractors entering the city domains for making sanitation a profit entity. Most of the workers employed by these contractors are Dalits. Hence, a scheme fully owned by the state has become a toolkit for the privatisation of public health services and continues caste discrimination.

On March 30, 2024, in the Himachal Pradesh High Court, the Urban Development Department said that there are just five sanitation inspectors in the Shimla Municipal Corporation, which comprises 34 wards. Instead of recruiting more such inspectors, this cadre is being declared dead after they retire. In a State where there are more than 50 municipal bodies, there are only 20 sanitation inspectors, which means that there are some municipalities that have no sanitation inspectors.

There are similar problems with other programmes too. Such failures have been dragging down India's EPI performance.

Development model

The EPI may be quite comprehensive. However, one of its features of mapping exposes the unsustainability of our development processes. This means that or development models must be altered. The EPI must also be seen in the background of a recent judgment where the Supreme Court observed the links between climate change and basic human rights. Climate scientists have said that the reasons for the current problems are anthropogenic and systemic in nature.

We will have to link policies to human rights in order to tackle these issues.

A scheme fully owned by the state has become a toolkit for privatisation of public health services and continues caste discrimination

Thriving on the politics of fear

The BJP's ads show the party's contempt for the Constitution and the rule of law

STATE OF PLAY

Janaki Nair

The Congress' victory in the 2023 Assembly election in Karnataka was a difficult pill for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to swallow, especially since the grand old party had secured its biggest vote share in 34 years. Then the Congress decided to implement its five guarantees: free bus rides for women, ₹2,000 a month to each woman-headed household, free electricity up to 200 units, 10 kgs of rice, and guarantees for the young and unemployed. But above all, the Siddaramaiah government has wrested control of the police. It has lost no opportunity to remind the police to return to the impartiality to which they are committed and literally shed their orange tinge (in two police stations, Kaup and Vijayapura, the police donned saffron for Vijayadashami). In short, the government has honoured its commitment to the Constitution both by offering welfare schemes and by protecting all citizens equally.

The previous 'double engine' government (2019-23) had introduced, with extraordinary speed and little discussion, the Karnataka Prevention of Slaughter and Preservation of Cattle Act, 2021; the Karnataka Religious Structures (Protection) Act, 2021; and the Karnataka Protection of Right to Freedom of Religion Act, 2022. These laws had emboldened the majority and induced fear among all the minorities. They had also bred a whole layer of intermediaries (apart from the police) who decided which parts of the cattle trade would be allowed. The regime also honoured as 'martyrs' those who had dubious pasts, such as Harsha of Shivamogga.

So it was with some relief that the citizens returned to things that mattered after May 2023: jobs, alleviation of poverty and price rise, freedom of speech, the rule of law, and dealing with the prospect of drought. The fulfilled guarantees drove public discourse in a different direction.

On the eve of elections, given that it had no positive pushback against the guarantees, the BJP tried to once again produce fear. There was an attempt to hoist a Bhagwa Dwaj on government property; it swiftly thwarted. A purported quarrel between a shopkeeper and a gang of local toughs (Hindus and Muslims) was handily turned into opposition to the Hanuman Chalisa, but this too died down. Then a blast in Rameshwaram Café and the unfortunate killing of Neha Hiremath by her former classmate Fayaz have fallen like ripe fruit into the hands of the BJP and given it the verve it lacked on urgent economic questions.

Now, the BJP's full-page advertisement carefully curates random 'fears' into a full-fledged red alert. It crosses all standards of decency and amplifies isolated events. It also stands in striking contrast to the Congress' advertisements based on its guarantees and on the unfulfilled Union government promises. The BJP advertisement, in stark black and red, warns against voting for the Congress. A man who resembles Mr. Siddaramaiah leaves bloody footprints as he walks away. A swirl of accusations posed as questions surround him: should a college going girl be sacrificed for love jihad? Should tea drinkers have to fear bombs in a café? Should those visiting the Vidhana Soudha hear the slogan 'Pakistan Zindabad'? Should the grazing cow have to fear the chopping block? In this compilation of nine accusations, six single out the Muslim as the enemy and three others serve as assorted warnings about Naxal violence, the reallocation of Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe welfare funds, and the sharing of Cauvery waters. The advertisement appears in all the major Kannada newspapers, but curiously, the BJP has chosen to keep this warning only for the Kannada-reading public.

The advertisement about the dangers of voting for the Congress is ironically the BJP's warning against itself. Wracked by internal dissidence, it falls back on the exhausted capital of Islamophobia, hoping to assert itself as the keeper of law and order, including instant 'encounter' and 'bulldozer' justice. It thus reiterates its contempt for the Constitution and indeed the rule of law that the people of Karnataka enjoy.

The Congress's aggressive campaign for the rights of the Government of Karnataka to its share of taxes is exemplified in its use of the *chombu*, colloquially, an empty vessel. The BJP has now claimed, perhaps emboldened by the Prime Minister's impunity, that the Karnataka *chombu* is full of the blood of Hindus. As a coded call for 'revenge,' it thus buries any idea of Karnataka or, indeed, of India.

Tensions grow in West Asia, a heavily militarised region

West Asia accounts for 30% of the global arms imports and spends the most on the military among all other regions

DATA POINT

Sambavi Parthasarathy

West Asia supplies the most extractive resources for the world's energy consumption, which makes peace an imperative in the region. Yet tensions are escalating in the region on account of the Israel-Gaza conflict, the hostilities between Iran and Israel, and the attacks and counter-attacks between Israel and Iran-backed militias from Lebanon and Yemen.

Apart from this, the region has also become one of the most heavily militarised in the world. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's 'Trends in International Arms Transfers 2023', four of the top 10 largest importers of arms last year were from West Asia, with the U.S. being the main supplier **(Table 1)**.

All this has resulted in West Asia becoming a powder keg.

Crises in the region

Israel's shadow war with Tehran underwent a dramatic escalation recently. Iran launched its first-ever full-scale military attack against Israel on April 14 in retaliation to the Benjamin Netanyahu government's attack on April 1 on an Iranian compound in Syria in which General Mohammed Reza Zehadi, the top commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, was killed.

Israel has been continuing its attacks on the Gaza Strip in response to the October 7 Hamas attack which led to the death of 1,139 people. Nearly 34,000 Palestinians have been killed so far. The conflict persists despite the international community urging for an immediate ceasefire. The 10-month-long Gaza war and the amping up of Iran-Israel hostilities has caused concern among international actors amid existing tensions such as the unresolved Yemeni civil war, the Lebanese political crisis, the 14-year-long Syrian civil war, and the Turkey-Cyprus conflict, among others.

Amid these crises, West Asia today accounts for almost 30% of the global arms imports and spends the most on the military among all other regions in the world. **Chart 2** shows region-wise military expenditure as a share of the GDP. In this measure, West Asia and North Africa have been consistently leading for over three decades now, though the share has come down from the peak of over 10% of GDP, reported in the 1990s. West Asia spent 4.6% of its GDP in 2020 on the military, compared with 3.3% in North America.

Share of GDP

Saudi Arabia and Qatar, the oil and natural gas rich nation-states, have consistently spent over 5% of their GDP on defence in recent years, the highest among countries in this region. Jordan, Oman, Kuwait and Israel have also spent close to 5% of their GDP on their militaries in the last decade. **Chart 3** shows the military expenditure as a share of GDP for individual countries in the West Asian region. Though Saudi Arabia and Oman's shares are on a decreasing trend, they continue to lead others in the world in this measure.

This is also the region where the share of the labour force employed in the armed forces is the highest. **Chart 4** shows that 2.5% of the labour force is engaged in the military in the West Asian and North African region, compared with only 1.2% in Europe and Central Asia.

The consistent demand for arms can be attributed to the growing instability in the region fuelled by domestic insurgencies, transnational terrorist attacks, unstable regional boundaries, and, in some cases, foreign policies and the need to project "hard power".

The hangover of the 'Arab Spring' that led to a lot of churning and resulted in the aforementioned issues has also contributed to the increased militarisation.

A region in turmoil

The data for the charts were sourced from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

Escalating tensions: A drone view of the apparent remains of a ballistic missile in the desert following a massive missile and drone attack by Iran on Israel, near the southern city of Arad, Israel. REUTERS

Table 1: United States has been the main supplier of arms to the West Asian countries. Numbers in %

Recipient	Top supplier	Second	Third
Qatar	U.S. (49)	U.K. (26)	Italy (21)
S. Arabia	U.S. (72)	Spain (15)	France (6.5)
Turkey	Spain (51)	Germany (31)	U.S. (11)
UAE	U.S. (55)	France (27)	Turkey (12)
Israel	U.S. (53)	Germany (47)	Italy (0.6)
Kuwait	Italy (94)	U.S. (6.0)	-
Bahrain	U.S. (100)	-	-
Iran	Russia (100)	-	-

While most of these countries are sourcing their military supplies from the U.S. and Europe, Iran is entirely dependent on Russia

Chart 2: The chart shows the region-wise military expenditure as a share of their GDP. West Asia and North Africa have been consistently leading all regions for over three decades

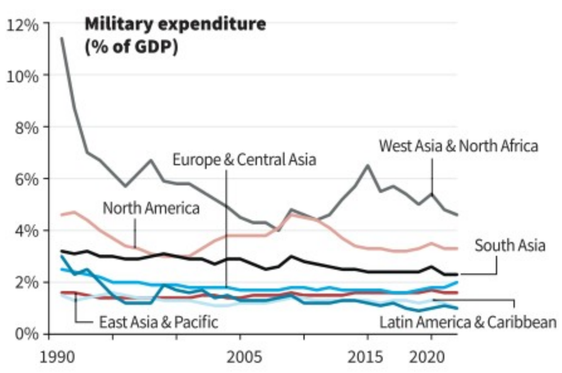


Chart 3: The chart shows the military expenditure as a share of a country's GDP in the West Asian region. Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Oman lead in this measure in the region

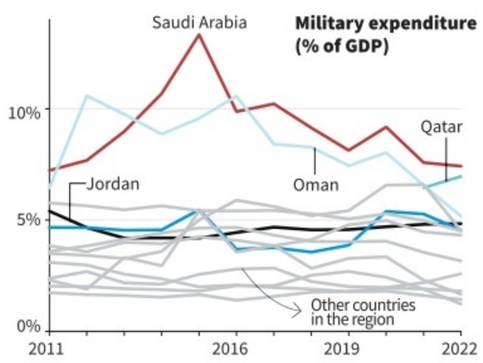
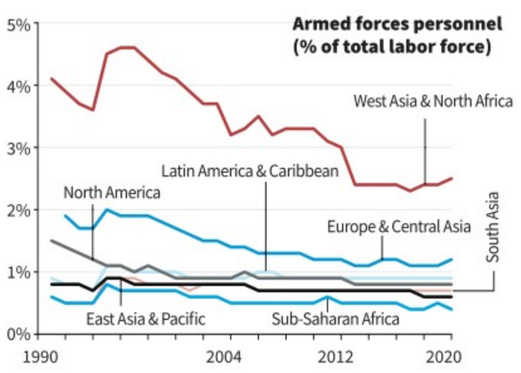


Chart 4: The chart shows the share of the labour force employed in the armed forces. The West Asian and North African region leads in this measure



FROM THE ARCHIVES

The Hindu.

FIFTY YEARS AGO APRIL 25, 1974

Power Board's frantic efforts to get coal

Madras, April 24: The Tamil Nadu Electricity Board faced with coal crisis is leading a hand to mouth existence with only 2.5 days' stocks on hand. The daily requirement of both Basin Bridge and Ennore Thermal Stations is about 4,500 tonnes. The Chairman of the Board, Mr. M.G. Raja Ram, said: "I am frantically searching for coal all over the country. With the impending railway strike, coal receipts, particularly from Singareni, are very poor."

The Chairman said one ship, authorised by the Director-General of Shipping, was at present loading about 6,000 tonnes of coal from Calcutta Port. This was expected to dock in Madras in about ten days. The Board had chartered a foreign ship with the help of the South India Shipping Corporation and it was now on its way to Calcutta for loading coal.

He said coal arrivals from Singareni had been disappointing. As against a monthly allotment of about 70,000 tonnes, despatches from Singareni for Madras had never exceeded 40 per cent of the requirement.

The State grid had now an average supply of 20.5 million units daily (this was the position at midnight on April 23). The relief from Neyveli accounted for about 5.6 million units, while Kerala gave about 1.7 million units on an average in Ennore, one 110 mw set and one 60 mw set were generating power. The average generation was about 97 mw or 2.3 million units a day. Basin Bridge gave 1.05 million units. Hydel power that was fed into the grid accounted for 9.8 million units a day, and with Neyveli and Kerala power, the grid was receiving on an average 20.5 million units daily.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO APRIL 25, 1924

Indian Railway orders in England

London, April 24: Orders have been placed with Messrs. Hawthorn Leslie and Company of Bebbarn-on-Tyne and Kerr Stuart Company of London for 4 and 6 tank engines respectively for Indian State Railways in addition to 40 passenger engines recently ordered from the Vulcan Foundry of Newton-le-Willows for the East Indian Railway Company. The contracts were secured in the face of keen continental competition, the deciding factors being high class character of work and speed in delivery.

From Page One

Cong. plan for equality is a 'dangerous game': Modi

On the party's plan to address economic inequality, the manifesto only says, "We will address the growing inequality of wealth and income through suitable changes in policies," with no mention of wealth redistribution or even any wealth survey apart from the promised caste census which is to gather socio-economic data as well.

Mr. Modi prefaced his claims on the Congress party's "dangerous game to steal quotas of Dalits, Adivasis and OBCs" with examples from the southern States of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, adding that the party's manifestos for the 2009 and 2014 Lok Sabha elections had also expressed the "same intention".

In Madhya Pradesh's Sagar, he said, " The Congress has murdered the principles of social justice. It has hurt the basic idea of the Constitution and insulted the legacy of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar."

Pointing to recent comments by the Indian Overseas Congress chief Sam Pitroda terming the U.S. inheritance tax as an "interesting idea", Mr. Modi warned that the Congress *panja* (hand) would snatch away the money that people accumulated for their children through their hard work. By the time the Congress had distanced itself from Mr. Pitroda's remarks, Mr. Modi was speaking at Betul, where he said, "Now, they are saying it is his personal opinion. But let me remind you that in 2011, the Planning Commission had mulled the same inheritance tax."

EVMs' control units do not recognise parties: SC

The Bench of Justices Khanna and Dipankar Datta had reserved the case for judgment on April 18, but convened again on Wednesday, with more questions for the top poll body.

The morning session saw the Bench read out in open court the specific queries it had for the EC concerning EVMs and VVPATs (Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail). Deputy Election Commissioner Nitesh Kumar Vyas appeared in person to respond to the court's questions. Mr. Vyas, on the first query as to where exactly the microcontrollers were situated, said all three units comprising an EVM – ballot units, control units, and VVPATs – had their own microprocessors.

To the second question about whether the microcontrollers were reprogrammable, the EC official said they were "one-time programmable" at the time of manufacturing.

On a query regarding the storage of EVM-VVPATs, he said the machines were sealed and kept in strongrooms for a statutory period of 45 days after the counting of votes. The strongrooms were opened 45 days after receiving a written confirmation from the High Courts.

RBI imposes curbs on Kotak Mahindra Bank

"For two consecutive years, the bank was assessed to be deficient in its IT risk and information security governance, contrary to requirements under regulatory guidelines," the RBI added. The bank was found to be "significantly non-compliant" with the corrective action plans issued by the Reserve Bank for 2022 and 2023, the RBI said.

In a statement, Kotak Bank said it had taken steps to adopt new technologies to strengthen its IT systems, and "will continue to work with RBI to swiftly resolve balance issues at the earliest".

Cong. wants religion-based quota in military: Rajnath

Minister says the party, in its manifesto, has cleverly tried to bring in 'Muslim reservation', but Prime Minister Narendra Modi exposed its plan, and that is why the party is attacking him

Nistula Hebbar
VISAKHAPATNAM

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday accused the Congress of trying to divide "every institution" in society on the basis of religion, stating that the party's manifesto hinted at bringing in religion-based reservations which could extend to the armed forces. The situation was a disturbing development for the unity of the country, Mr. Singh added.

The Defence Minister was speaking at a public meeting in the coastal town of Visakhapatnam as part of the BJP-TDP-JSP alliance's campaign in Andhra Pradesh.

Drawing a connection to the Sachar Committee's report suggesting a religion-based headcount in the armed forces, Mr. Singh alleged that the Congress would go forth with communal reservations in the armed forces.

Mr. Singh said sections 3 and 6 of the chapter on minorities in the Congress manifesto should be read together to apprehend the Congress's aim of bringing in religion-based reservations everywhere.

Vote drive: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh campaigning in Anakapalli in Andhra Pradesh on Wednesday. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

"Section 3 says that the party would encourage and assist minority students and others so that they can take advantage of all the provisions for education and jobs. Section 6 says that the Congress would ensure minorities get their 'fair share'. Congress wants to get religion-based reservations through the back door," he said.

"Again, the Congress in their manifesto have hinted at reservation for religious minorities and if it gets implemented then armed forces could also be part of it and it will be extremely dangerous for unity and integrity of the country," Mr. Singh said. "The Congress, through their manifesto, has cleverly tried to bring in 'Muslim reservation', but Prime Minister Narendra Modi exposed them, and that's why the Congress is attacking PM Modi," he added.

During the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government, led by the Congress, the Rangnath Mishra Commission and the Sachar Committee were formed and the sole purpose of these commissions was to give special treatment to a specific religion in the name of minority welfare, he said.

He alleged that the Congress government of the erstwhile united Andhra Pradesh was the "first laboratory of communal agenda" in the State. By giving reservations to the Muslim community in government jobs, the Congress blatantly ignored the Constitution, Mr. Singh said.

"From 2004 to 2014, the Congress government made five attempts to introduce Muslim reservation but the Supreme Court prevented them from doing it," he added.

Mr. Singh also criticised the Jagan Mohan Reddy government for "failing" to develop the State despite continuous support given by the Centre.

M. Sribharat, the Lok Sabha candidate from Vishakhapatnam from the TDP, and Vishnu Kumar Raju, former BJP MLA and the party's candidate from the Vishakhapatnam (North), constituency were present.

Plea seeks SIT probe into graft revealed through bonds data

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Several firms that were under investigation had donated money to the ruling party

A petition was filed in the Supreme Court on Wednesday for constituting a Special Investigation Team (SIT) to investigate each instance of *quid pro quo*, corruption, and kickbacks that had been revealed through the disclosure of details on electoral bonds.

The petition, filed by Common Cause and the Centre for Public Interest Litigation, said some of the country's main investigative agencies "appear to have become accessories to corruption". Several firms that were under investigation had donated large sums of money to the ruling party, potentially to influence the outcomes of the probes, the petition said.

"Thus, the investigation in this case would not only need to unravel the entire conspiracy in each instance, which would involve officers of the company, officials of the government and functionaries of political parties but also the officers concerned of agencies like the Enforcement Directorate/Income Tax Department and Central Bureau of Investigation etc., who appear to have become part of this conspiracy," it submitted.

Referring to reports and extensive data mining done by *The Hindu* and other media outlets, the petition said the information published revealed that the bulk of the bonds appear to have been given as *quid pro quo* arrangements by corporate entities to political parties.

"Though these apparent payoffs amount to several thousand crores, they appear to have influenced contracts worth lakhs of crores and regulatory inaction by agencies worth thousands of crores and also appear to have allowed substandard or dangerous drugs to be sold in the market, endangering the lives of millions of people in the country. That is why the electoral bonds scam has been called by many astute observers as the largest scam in India so far, and perhaps in the world," the petition said.

Bengal moves SC against termination of 24,000 school jobs

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The West Bengal government on Wednesday approached the Supreme Court against a Calcutta High Court order terminating the appointment of nearly 24,000 teaching and non-teaching staff in State-run and aided schools across the State.

The State government said the High Court acted in an erroneous manner by mechanically cancelling all the appointments without examining the merits of each individual recruitment.

Besides, the sudden termination of services of 23,123 teaching and non-teaching staff has put school education in the State in a quandary, that too, at the beginning of the new academic year. The students would ultimately be impacted by the order, the State complained.

The State contended that the High Court ought to have stayed the implementation of its order for the time being, giving the West Bengal School Service Commission (SSC) leeway to make fresh appointments. It also said the court had ordered a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) investigation into a Cabinet decision to create conditional supernumerary posts to accommodate the teachers whose appointments were allegedly irregular. The State argued that neither the SSC nor the CBI had ever indicated that the entire recruitment process was tainted.

No forests or animals will be left if human-wildlife conflicts continue: SC

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday warned that human-wildlife conflicts pose a danger to the very existence of forests and wildlife, a balance has to be struck which takes care of the rights of both stakeholders.

"Forests and wildlife will not exist if conflict between animals and humans are not resolved," Justice B.R. Gavai observed.

The court's observations came while hearing a case concerning the demarcation of the boundaries of Assam's Pobitora wildlife sanctuary and the settlement of rights of villagers, drawn from the marginalised, Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and backward communities, who reside within the sanctuary.

The court was hearing a case concerning the demarcation of the boundaries of the Pobitora wildlife sanctuary. RITU RAJ KONWAR

The Assam government submitted that it has constituted a special committee chaired by the Chief Secretary (Forests) to survey and suggest alterations in the boundaries of the sanctuary to protect the rights of the wildlife as well as the human inhabitants. A preliminary survey of the sanctuary had already been done and a map prepared.

The Bench said the State's proposals regarding the sanctuary would be cleared by the National Board of Wildlife and also undergo the scrutiny of the top court. The court ordered the States to include the Chief Wildlife Warden and the Field Director of the Pobitora wildlife sanctuary to be made members of the special committee to represent the concerns of the wildlife.

The court noted in its order that "from the *prima facie* perusal of the map, it appears that the State proposes to delete smaller areas of the wildlife sanctuary and include a larger area so as to account for the land of the settlers and also the issue of the growing population of rhinoceros".

Justice Gavai said the court respects environmental activists, but the human aspect of the problem should also be taken into consideration. "

On March 13, the apex court had stayed the Assam government's decision to denotify the Pobitora wildlife sanctuary.

PM panicking due to Cong. manifesto: Rahul

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI/PUNE

Wading back into the wealth redistribution debate, former Congress chief Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi is in panic after seeing the Congress' "revolutionary" manifesto. In what seemed like a response to the BJP attacks, Mr. Gandhi said he has only spoken about inequality and injustice, and not spoken of taking any particular action against it.

The Congress also distanced itself from comments by Sam Pitroda, who heads the Indian Overseas Congress, in which he seemed to advocate for an inheritance tax on the rich.

Speaking at a social justice conclave, Mr. Gandhi said that those who call themselves *deshbhakt* (patriots) are scared of the 'X-ray' of a caste census, but insisted that no force can stop it. Social justice is his life's mission and not a matter of politics, he added. "We have calculated... what we felt is justice and that help should be given. We put it down in the manifesto," he added.

Later in the day, addressing election rallies in Maharashtra's Amravati and Solapur, Mr. Gandhi, asserted that his party's promise of welfare schemes like the right to apprenticeship, cash assistance for women, and jobs for youth would create crores of "lakhpatis".

His comments came on a day when Indian Overseas Congress chief Sam Pitroda's advocacy for an inheritance tax gave fresh ammunition to the BJP.

Rejecting Mr. Pitroda's comment as his personal opinion, Congress leader Jairam Ramesh posted a video on X, showing former Minister of State for Finance and BJP MP Jayant Sinha also arguing in favour of a 55% inheritance tax, as well as an old post of BJP leader Amit Malviya supporting Mr. Sinha.

Blasts damage bridge in Manipur's Kangpokpi

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

Days after voting for the Lok Sabha election concluded in Kangpokpi district of Manipur, three blasts took place on a bridge on the National Highway-2 near Saparmeina around 1 a.m. on Wednesday, security officials said.

This comes just as the remaining parts of Outer Manipur are scheduled to vote in the second phase of election on April 26.

While no injuries were reported, traffic has been affected along the route. It is an arterial road for supplying essential items to the Imphal Valley, security officials said. They said that the area had been cordoned off by the security forces and investigations were under way. "No one has claimed responsibility for it so far," one official said.

Embassy asks man to call Russian officials for info on his brother

Suhasini Haidar
Vijaita Singh

Four months after he last heard from his brother who was pushed into the war zone on the Russia-Ukraine border after being hired as a security helper by the Russian Army, the Indian Embassy in Moscow allegedly advised Jammu and Kashmir resident Aijaz Ahmad Sheikh to directly contact Russian officials seeking information on his brother.

Mr. Sheikh last spoke with his brother, Zahoor Ahmad Sheikh, 27, on December 31 last year. Since then, the family has had no contact with Mr. Zahoor.

"We are tired of calling the Indian Embassy in Moscow. A few days ago, they provided me numbers and e-mail IDs of the Russian government officials concerned. Some numbers belong to the Defence Ministry of Russia, even they are not responding to our calls," Mr. Sheikh said.

Into a trap: Indians who were hired as security helpers by Russia were forced to fight on the Russia-Ukraine border. AFP

"People suggested that we go to Russia, but it will cost us at least ₹10 lakh, and we do not have that kind of money. We request the government to help us," said Mr. Sheikh.

Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) sources said that the Embassy has had no direct communication with Mr. Zahoor but has been pursuing the issue of his release with the Russian authorities. "The request has been made not only with the Foreign Ministry but has also been taken up with Defence Ministry and Security Council. The Embassy will continue to pursue the case till the person is located and released," an official said.

Mr. Zahoor was working in Chandigarh till last year. He had a Bachelor's degree in Agriculture and decided to go to Russia after he came across a YouTube video that promised the job of a security helper with the Russian Army. "... He signed a contract in the Russian language and was categorically told that he would not be sent to the war zone,," Mr. Sheikh said.

The Hindu reported first on February 20 that at least three Indians who were hired as security helpers by Russia were forced to fight alongside the country's forces on the Russia-Ukraine border.

Officials have maintained that the Indian Embassy in Moscow has been taking up the case of every Army recruit who wishes to return with Russian authorities, estimating the number of those who wish to return at about 20.

Diplomatic sources said that while the Russian Embassy in Delhi and the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs have been closely engaged, this issue involved the Russian military and hence the cases take longer to process, as officials point out that the Indians have voluntarily signed contracts to enlist.

Two soldiers injured in J&K gunfight with militants

The Hindu Bureau
SRINAGAR

Two Army soldiers were injured as security forces exchanged fire with militants during an anti-militancy operation at Bandipora in Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday. The operation was still on at the time of going to press.

The condition of the injured soldiers was said to be stable. The security forces have pressed into service a helicopter to maintain vigil in the area.

An Army spokesman said the anti-militancy operation began on April 21.

The contact with the militants was established during a joint operation of the Army and the Jammu and Kashmir Police in Mulkhyama Forest, Bandipore.

A firefight started in the early hours of Wednesday "after the hiding militants opened fire at them".

ELECTIONS 2024

Gadkari faints while speaking at Maharashtra campaign rally

Under the strain of soaring temperatures and hectic election campaigning, senior BJP leader and Union Minister Nitin Gadkari, who is a diabetic, collapsed on the dais midway during his speech in Yavatmal district in Maharashtra on Wednesday.

Shortly after the speech, he posted on social media platform X, "I felt discomfort due to the heat at the rally in Pusad. But now I am completely healthy, and am leaving for Varud to attend the next meeting. Thank you for your love and good wishes."

Mr. Gadkari has a history of suffering such bouts of dizziness. In August 2019, he experienced a fainting spell after a sudden dip in his sugar level during a public function in Solapur.

Nitin Gadkari addressing a public meeting at Varud in Amravati district. PTI

Cong. involved in scams in all three worlds, says Nadda

During his election campaign in Bihar, BJP president J.P. Nadda accused the Opposition parties of keeping the country in the fire of casteism, appeasement, anarchy, and division. "The Congress committed scams everywhere whether it be *nabh*, *paataal,* and *jal* [in the sky, beneath the earth, and inside the waters]," Mr. Nadda quipped.

"The INDIA bloc is just an alliance of those who promote nepotism and corruption," Mr. Nadda alleged.

He listed the names of most of the political parties in the INDIA bloc and their leaders, and described them as family-run parties.

He asserted that one-half of the INDIA bloc leaders were in jail while the other half were out on bail.

> What has happened to Nitish Kumar? He has not spoken a word on Narendra Modi's utterances? Has he turned dumb?
>
> **ASADUDDIN OWAISI**
> AIMIM president

Poll timings extended in parts of Bihar due to heatwave

The Election Commission of India on Wednesday extended the poll timings by two hours in some polling stations in Banka, Madhepura, Khagaria and Munger Lok Sabha constituencies of Bihar for enhanced voter participation amid a heatwave. PTI

> The future of the INDIA bloc depends, to a large extent, on the performance of the Trinamool Congress in West Bengal
>
> **ABHISHEK BANERJEE**
> Trinamool Congress leader

In a tough fight, Om Birla faces off with ex-BJP member in Kota

Mohammed Iqbal
KOTA

Facing a tough challenge from his former party colleague Prahlad Gunjal, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla has concentrated on mobilising the grassroots Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) workers for the April 26 election in Rajasthan's Kota Lok Sabha constituency. Mr. Birla is vying for a third consecutive victory.

The entry of Mr. Gunjal – a Gujjar strongman who was twice elected an MLA from the BJP – as the Congress candidate has turned the electoral battle in Kota into a "clash of ego" between the two rivals. Mr. Gunjal, 63, joined the Congress in March while alleging that the BJP's politics in Kota was dominated by "just one person", and affirming that he wanted to maintain his self-respect.

Mr. Gunjal was also a staunch supporter of former Chief Minister Vasundhara Raje. As Ms. Raje was sidelined by the BJP's top leadership in its strategy to promote next-generation leaders, the relations between her close confidant Mr. Gunjal and the RSS-backed Mr. Birla turned increasingly bitter over the past few years.

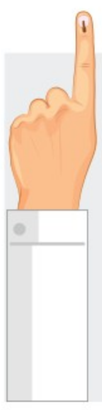
The Congress's strategic move to field Mr. Gunjal as its candidate opposite Mr. Birla has turned the contest in Kota into a high-profile affair. The Congress is also banking on the Other Backward Class (OBC) status of Mr. Gunjal, which could make a favourable combination with Dalits and Muslims among the 20.88 lakh-strong electorate.

On the other hand, Mr. Birla – a two-time MLA and a sitting MP since 2014 – has maintained strong relations in the Lok Sabha constituency and focused on urban voters, while laying emphasis on the BJP's guarantees during his public meetings. He said his election in Kota would only be a means to ensure a third term for Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

A section of voters are unhappy with Mr. Birla's unwillingness to address the issues confronting the local trading community. Though the clearance for the construction of an airport, for which a detailed project report is being prepared, will help promote business in the region, Goods and Services Tax anomalies are adversely affecting several sectors, J.P. Sharma, former president of the Kota Transport Companies' Association, said.

A record number of 26 students tragically died by suicide in the coaching hub of Kota in 2023, but it has found no mention in the election campaign. Hadoti Kisan Union general secretary Dashrath Kumar told *The Hindu* that despite 83% of the region's land being irrigated by river waters, farmers were suffering because of constant increase in input costs, and the Chambal canal network that has not been expanded. "The closure of institutions such as Tilam Sangh and Keshoraipatan's sugar mill have reduced employment opportunities for the local youth," Mr. Kumar said.

These and similar other issues have not found any mention in the final phase of the contest, as both the sides are busy dealing with internal wrangling. While Ms. Raje's faction is seen as reluctant to join the BJP's campaign, veteran Congress leader Shanti Dhariwal and his supporters have kept a distance from Mr. Gunjal.



Election interactive

Scan the QR code or visit **https://newsth.live/nDBWF6** for an interactive feature on the Lok Sabha election. This feature uses maps and tables to show phase-wise polls and voter turnout trends in the ongoing election. It also displays detailed results of the previous two Lok Sabha elections (2014 and 2019), which can be filtered down using several criteria.

As PM targets Cong., Phase 2 campaign ends on a sour note

Eighty-eight constituencies across 13 States are going to the polls tomorrow; Modi continued his attack on the Opposition party on the last day of campaign; rebutting the allegations, Congress has filed a complaint with the Election Commission

Sreeparna Chakrabarty
NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's controversial speech on the Congress's alleged plans to "redistribute wealth" was the highlight of the high-voltage campaign for the second phase of the Lok Sabha election which ended on Wednesday.

A total of 88 seats across 13 States are at stake in the polling on Friday. All 20 seats of Kerala, 14 of the 28 in Karnataka, 13 in Rajasthan, eight each in Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh, six in Madhya Pradesh, five each in Assam and Bihar, three each in Chhattisgarh and West Bengal, and one each in Manipur, Tripura, and Jammu and Kashmir are going to polls.

Voting in Madhya Pradesh's Betul, which was also scheduled on Friday, was shifted to the third phase on May 7 following the death of BSP candidate Ashok Balawi.

The prominent leaders in the fray include Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi and Shashi Tharoor, Union Minister Rajeev Chandrasekhar of the BJP, and actor-turned politicians Hema Malini and Arun Govil.

The BJP has an edge having won 52 out of the 88 seats in the 2019 election.

Campaign blitz: Narendra Modi being felicitated at a poll rally in Surguja, Chhattisgarh, and, right, Priyanka Gandhi during a campaign in support of Rahul Gandhi at Nilambur in Wayanad on Wednesday. ANI

The Congress has 18 seats. The Janata Dal (U) and Shiv Sena have four seats each, while the Muslim League has two and the BSP, CPI (M), RSP, Kerala Congress (M) and JD(S) one each, among others.

High-decibel attack

The high point of the campaign was the high-decibel attacks by Mr. Modi on the Congress's manifesto at a campaign rally in Banswara in Rajasthan.

Mr. Modi alleged on Sunday that the Opposition party was planning to give away people's hard-earned money and valuables to "infiltrators" and "those who have more children".

He said that former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had said in a speech in 2006 that Muslims had the first claim on the country's resources.

The Congress on its part approached the Election Commission on Monday and formally lodged a complaint seeking action against Mr. Modi. It alleged that the Prime Minister invoked religion and religious symbols to create enmity between groups.

"The only available remedy compatible with the principle of zero-tolerance towards allegations of corrupt practices, is the disqualification of the candidates who try to create a divide between different classes of the citizens of India regardless of the stature or position of that candidate," the Congress complaint said.

However, the very next day on Tuesday, Mr. Modi again accused the Congress of planning to redistribute people's property if voted to power, but stopped short of saying that the wealth would go to Muslims.

At a rally in Uttar Pradesh's Aligarh, which has a sizeable Muslim population, the PM said he wanted to alert people to the intentions of the Congress and the Opposition Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA).

The Prime Minister capped his poll rallies on Wednesday by pointing to remarks of Congress leader Sam Pitroda on "inheritance tax" and launched an all-out attack on the issue of "wealth redistribution" at Surguja in Chhattisgarh. The Congress distanced itself from the comments of the U.S.-based president of its overseas wing.

After the second phase on April 26, voting will be over in Kerala, Rajasthan and Tripura. Polling has already been completed in Tamil Nadu, Uttarakhand, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Mizoram, Nagaland, Puducherry, Sikkim and Lakshadweep.

Dropped MP Namgyal revolts against BJP in Ladakh

Peerzada Ashiq
SRINAGAR

The BJP in Ladakh is facing discontent within its ranks, as Jamyang Tsering Namgyal, MP, who was not fielded by the party in the Lok Sabha constituency for the election, rallied his supporters on Wednesday and expressed his unhappiness over the nomination of Tashi Gyalson as the party candidate.

"My supporters have assembled spontaneously in Leh today. They are not happy with the nomination. With such a reaction, the big question remains if the party can retain the seat," Mr. Namgyal said. "I will sit with my supporters and a final decision will be taken. I will consider the sentiments of my supporters and take a collective decision for the interests of Ladakh. People are not ready to accept it [nomination]."

Mr. Namgyal, once the BJP's star young leader in Ladakh who hogged the limelight for his speeches after the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019, said he raised the issue of nomination with the party high command.

"I did ask the party if I had performed poorly in Parliament, violated party stand, misbehaved or faced corruption charges. It was an unexpected decision for me," Mr. Namgyal said, in an open revolt to the decision taken by the party.

Battle lines drawn in M.P.'s Bundelkhand, Vindhya

Mehul Malpani
BHOPAL

Sharing their boundaries with Uttar Pradesh, the Bundelkhand and Vindhya regions of Madhya Pradesh have many similarities with the neighbouring State – from dialects and culture to the prominence of the caste factor in politics.

Five out of six seats of Madhya Pradesh that go to the polls in the second phase of the Lok Sabha election on Friday fall in these regions. The six seats are Rewa and Satna of Vindhyachal; Khajuraho, Tikamgarh (SC) and Damoh of Bundelkhand; and Hoshangabad.

At present, all the six seats are held by the Bharatiya Janata Party whereas the Congress-led Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) this time hopes to benefit from the caste equations and anti-incumbency sentiment against MPs.

Local leaders of the Opposition bloc, however, have been forced to lead their campaign on their own as among the national leaders only Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge had campaigned here. Mr. Kharge held a rally in Satna last week as he filled in for party leader Rahul Gandhi, who could not make it for health reasons.

On the other hand, the BJP's campaigning has been led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP president J.P. Nadda. Even on Wednesday, Mr. Modi held two rallies in Sagar that borders Damoh, and Betul that borders Hoshangabad. He capped it all off with a roadshow in capital Bhopal.

Meanwhile, the fortunes of candidates in Khajuraho, where State BJP chief V. D. Sharma is contesting, Tikamgarh, where Union Minister Virendra Kumar Khateek is in the fray, and Satna, where four-term MP Ganesh Singh is battling to retain his seat, will also be keenly watched.

The Khajuraho seat had made headlines recently when the nomination of Meera Yadav, the INDIA bloc's Samajwadi Party candidate, was rejected by the returning officer following irregularities in her form, forcing the SP and Congress to extend their last-minute support to All India Forward Bloc candidate R.B. Prajapati, an ex-IAS officer. The rejection was slammed by both parties as "murder of democracy" by the ruling BJP. Mr. Prajapati, however, has been campaigning with a focus on local issues with no top leader of the two parties coming to Khajuraho. He had received only 698 votes in the Chandla Assembly constituency in the 2023 Assembly election.

The Tikamgarh seat, a BJP stronghold, came into existence only in 2008. Mr. Khateek, a seven-time MP (four times from Sagar and thrice from Tikamgarh), is again in the fray from the ruling party. The Congress has fielded Pankaj Ahirwar, a youth leader, who will be contesting his first election and hoping to capitalise on the local anti-incumbency sentiment against Mr. Khateek. Apart from the Dalits, Other Backward Class (OBC) voters also constitute a sizeable chunk here.

The Satna constituency has seen a three-way interesting contest throughout the campaigning ever since prominent Vindhya leader Narayan Tripathi entered the fray on Bahujan Samaj Party ticket. The four-time MP and BJP candidate, Mr. Singh is locked in a contest against the Congress's Siddharth Kushwaha who defeated the former from Satna Assembly constituency less than six months ago in the Assembly election. The constituency has a significant upper caste population, especially Brahmins, and Mr. Tripathi, observers say, is likely to capitalise on this group.

Neighbouring Rewa is also witnessing a triangular fight, which is believed to have got more intense after BSP supremo Mayawati held a rally in support of party candidate Abhishek Patel last week. While the BJP has again fielded its two-term MP Janardan Mishra from here, the Congress has nominated his long-time political rival Neelam Mishra, a former BJP MLA.

While the two main parties have fielded Brahmin faces, the BSP hopes for the support of the OBC community, which also makes up a sizeable population here.

Damoh also awaits a fierce contest between two Lodhi candidates who hope for the support of the dominant community. The BJP has fielded former MLA Rahul Lodhi, who switched over from the Congress in 2020, while the Congress has named former MLA Tarvar Singh Lodhi. The seat was previously held by Prahlad Singh Patel, a former Union Minister and now a State Minister.

At his poll rally in Damoh last week, Mr. Modi had hit out at the Opposition alliance on issues ranging from the Ram Temple to defence procurements. He had also targeted Pakistan, without naming the country, saying that the "supplier of terror is now struggling for *atta*".

Mr. Kharge, in Satna, had claimed that democracy in India will end if a government led by Mr. Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah came back. He had also accused the BJP-led Central government of "selling" the nation's assets to big corporates.

Past results

A look at the 2019 Lok Sabha election winners and runners-up for the six seats from M.P. going to the polls on April 26, along with their vote shares

Campaign support: M.P. CM Mohan Yadav during a roadshow. PTI

S.No	Constituency	Winner	Vote share (%)	Runner-up
1	Damoh	BJP	60.5	Congress
2	Hoshangabad	BJP	69.4	Congress
3	Khajuraho	BJP	64.5	Congress
4	Rewa	BJP	57.6	Congress
5	Satna	BJP	52.9	Congress
6	Tikamgarh	BJP	61.3	Congress

INBRIEF

BJP mocks Cong. for delaying announcement of candidates

As the Lok Sabha election inches closer in Haryana, the Congress is yet to declare its candidates, even as the BJP has taken the lead in announcing candidates and stepped up electioneering. Haryana, which has 10 Lok Sabha constituencies, will have single-phase polling on May 25. In the 2019 election, which saw a 70% turnout, the BJP swept all the 10 seats. The Congress's delay in selecting candidates has given the BJP leaders new ammunition to target the party. Haryana Congress president Chaudhary Udaybhan said the BJP had fewer supporters and hence was able to declare candidates soon, while the Congress has scores of applicants.

BJP targets Pandian, slams BJD's 'misrule and misdeed'

The Odisha unit of the BJP trained its guns on V.K. Pandian, a close aide of Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, on Wednesday as it launched an attack on the Biju Janata Dal government's "misrule and misdeed". The BJP released a booklet titled '*Pachis barsha ra papa pedi*' (25 years' box of sins), levelling charges of corruption, misgovernance, anti-farmer policies, atrocities against women, distress migration, rising unemployment, protection of criminals, and anti-tribal deeds against the ruling party. The BJP has devised a carefully crafted strategy, portraying Mr. Pandian as the face of corruption and mismanagement. In a 60-page booklet, Mr. Pandian's presence spans 15 separate pages.

Dalit anger threatens to trip BJP's grip on a stronghold

In Chhattisgarh's reserved constituency of Janjgir Champa, there is a growing fear among the community that alterations to the Constitution could mean scrapping of reservation; party finding it tough to shake off perception despite PM's assurance

Sobhana K. Nair
JANJGIR CHAMPA (CHHATTISGARH)

The sun is at its peak and the yellow earth is shimmering, radiating back the heat. Khoobchand Diwakar, 50, fumbles for his mobile phone. The small black device is out of charge. He looks at its blank screen and disappointedly puts it back in his pocket.

"I have seen those videos, they say that Ambedkar's Constitution will be changed. They did similar tinkering in Gujarat and now they are extending it to the entire country. If they return to power, reservation will go," he says authoritatively.

The rest of the group at Amartal village, in Akaltara tehsil that comes under the Janjgir Champa Lok Sabha constituency, of landless labourers and small-time farmers, all huddled around, nod in agreement. Mela Ram Jangeda (45) adds his bit to the conversation, "I have heard they [BJP] gave slogans denouncing Dalits and tribals...they shouldn't say such things. It is insulting to all of us," he remarks. Janjgir Champa constituency votes on May 7.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi during a public meeting for the Lok Sabha polls in Janjgir-Champa district of Chhattisgarh on April 23. PTI

None of them can pinpoint the source, the WhatsApp message or the YouTube channel where they saw it. But they point out that it has been doing the rounds since the Assembly election was held last November. Santosh Dhimar, 40, is incandescent as he launches into an uncontrolled rant, at this point. "Every five years, the government must change. But it doesn't, because they hold the remote control. No matter what you press at the EVMs, the vote goes to the BJP. Meanwhile, we struggle to find two meals a day for our children," Mr. Dhimar said.

Lack of vacancies

"*Sab samanay ho jayenge* (everyone will become equal)" and "*arakshan khatam ho jayega* (reservation will end)" is a phrase repeated village after village, in this reserved constituency of Chhattisgarh, as they express fear about lack of vacancies, growing unemployment, stagnant wages and rising inflation.

In the last two general elections, the BJP rode high on the back of subaltern Hinduism, with a consolidation of non-dominant Other Backward Classes and Dalit caste groups in their favour. But that carefully curated balance seems to be tipping. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been issuing clarifications that the BJP will not abolish the Constitution. In his speech on Tuesday, at Sakti, which falls under the Janjgir Champa Lok Sabha constituency, Mr. Modi reiterated it and called the narrative a Congress "ploy". "Even Bhim Rao Ambedkar himself can't abolish the Constitution," he asserted. Changing gears, Mr. Modi, at his speeches in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh over the last two days, has accused the Congress of splicing SC/ST reservation by handing it over to Muslims.

Key constituency

Janjgir Champa is in many ways significant. BSP founder Kanshi Ram fought his debut election from here in 1984. He got a little over 32,000 votes. For 25 years, the BJP has been winning this seat without a break and the last time the Congress won here was in the 1999 polls. The BSP always had a strong presence here but could never win the seat. The gap between the BJP and the Congress has often been equivalent to the vote that the BSP gets.

The disenchantment with the BJP is not new. In the November Assembly election when the Congress was routed, the party won all the eight Assembly segments here, winning four seats from the BJP, two from the BSP and retaining the two it held.

Not only the BJP but the BSP also seems to be losing its grip. Dhirender Patle, 28, at Badhra village in Pamgarh tehsil, is upbeat about the polls. A few days ago, he joined the procession that followed Congress candidate Shiv Kumar Dahariya, who was filing his nomination.

In the 2019 general elections, he had voted for the BSP. "The BSP has surrendered to the BJP. There is no point wasting our vote on them," he proclaims. Horil Lal Banjare, 60, who is sitting next to him, quietly says that his vote is still for BSP.

Patnaik kicks off election campaign for BJD in Odisha

The Hindu Bureau
BHUBANESWAR

Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik on Wednesday exuded confidence of winning both the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections as he kicked off the official campaign of the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) from Hinjili, his long-standing Assembly constituency.

Addressing a public rally in Hinjili in his home district of Ganjam, Mr. Patanaik outlined a 10-year development plan with a strong emphasis on empowering the youth.

He announced plans for a youth budget aimed at harnessing the potential of the State's young population for its development. Mr. Patnaik envisioned the next decade, from 2024 to 2034, as a golden era for the youth of Odisha with a focus on industrial investment, employment generation, and skill development.

"The next 10 years will be known as the decade of Odisha which will draw attention of the whole world for programme implementation. Odisha will complete 100 years of being an independent State in 2036 and by then it will emerge as the number one State in the country," the Chief Minister said.

Will build madrasas in Assam after LS polls: Ajmal

The Hindu Bureau
GUWAHATI

All India United Democratic Front (AIUDF) supremo Maulana Badruddin Ajmal said on Wednesday that the elected leaders of his party would build 700 madrasas to compensate for some 750 closed down in Assam.

The BJP-led Assam government closed down all State-run madrasas in 2023 and converted them into regular schools.

Mr. Ajmal said all AIUDF candidates would get down to opening 700 madrasas after winning the Lok Sabha seats they are contesting – Karimganj, Nagaon and Dhubri.

He said the party would move the Supreme Court, if need be, over the closure of madrasas, and said education was a right.

Akhilesh Yadav to contest LS polls from Kannauj, file nomination today

Mayank Kumar
LUCKNOW

The Samajwadi Party (SP) on Wednesday declared that its president, Akhilesh Yadav, will contest the 2024 Lok Sabha election from the Kannauj constituency in Uttar Pradesh. Mr. Yadav will file his nomination on Thursday.

"Honourable national president Akhilesh Yadav*ji* will file nomination at noon from Kannauj Lok Sabha seat as the SP nominee," the party said in a statement.

Putting to rest rumours

Earlier, the SP had declared former MP Tej Pratap Yadav, who is Mr. Yadav's nephew and son-in-law of former Bihar Chief Minister Lalu Prasad, as its candidate from the seat. But speculation was rife that the SP president would himself contest the seat amid demands from the party's local unit.

Earlier, the SP had declared former MP Tej Pratap Yadav, who is Akhilesh Yadav's nephew, as party candidate from Kannauj seat. PTI

Kannauj will go to the polls in the fourth phase on May 13.

Earlier in the day, when Mr. Yadav was asked whether he would contest from Kannauj, he told reporters, "You will get to know when nomination papers will be filed, might be informed even before that."

"The matter is of historic victory from the seat. The ruling BJP will become history in these polls as people have made up their minds for the INDIA bloc. PDA (*pichde*, Dalit and *alpashankhak*) will defeat the NDA this time," he said.

Mr. Yadav's political career started from Kannauj when he was elected as a Lok Sabha member for the first time in 2000. He represented the seat thrice.

Akhilesh's political career started from Kannauj in U.P. when he was elected as Lok Sabha member for the first time in 2000

His wife Dimple Yadav got elected in 2014 and in the 2012 byelection when Mr. Yadav resigned after getting elected as Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister.

Kannauj holds significance for parties claiming to represent socialist ideas as Ram Manohar Lohia, a socialist stalwart, won the seat in 1967 as a Samyukta Socialist Party nominee, while SP founder Mulayam Singh Yadav won it in 1999.

Allegation of conspiring against PM can't be levelled irresponsibly, says Delhi HC

The Hindu Bureau
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday cautioned that hatching a conspiracy against the Prime Minister amounted to treason and such allegations could not be levelled irresponsibly without any cogent material.

Justice Jasmeet Singh made the observation while hearing a lawsuit by BJD MP Pinaki Misra against advocate Jai Anant Dehadrai over his allegedly defamatory remarks and statements, such as claiming that Mr. Misra and expelled Trinamool Congress MP Mahua Moitra conspired against the Prime Minister. "These are very serious allegations. You [Mr. Dehadrai] can't be trigger happy. You are alleging serious allegations of conspiracy against the Prime Minister by a sitting MP," the court said.

The court is hearing a lawsuit by BJD MP Pinaki Misra.

"Conspiracy to target the Prime Minister is an offence under IPC. It is treason," the court added.

Mr. Dehadrai and his counsel assured the court that he would not make further statements on Mr. Misra "conspiring" against the Prime Minister till the next date of hearing.

"Mr. [Raghav] Awasthi, who appears for the defendant [Mr. Dehadrai], assures the court that no allegation of the plaintiff being involved in any conspiracy against the Prime Minister will be made till the next date of hearing," the court said.

It said the Central Bureau of Investigation was already looking into the allegations, and the dispute between Mr. Dehadrai and Mr. Moitra was also pending before the High Court.

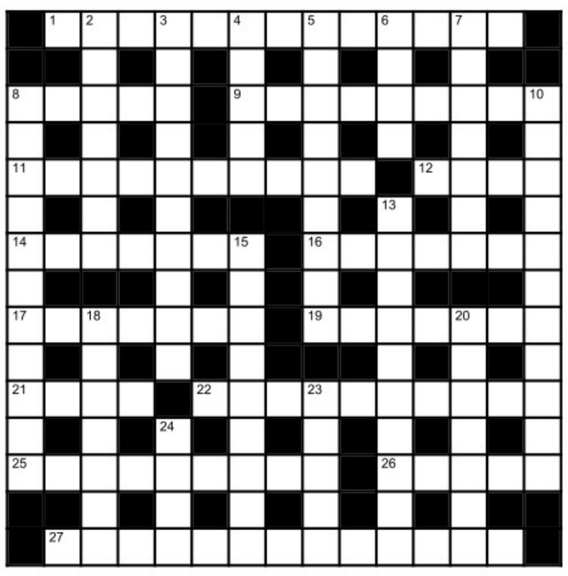
Advocate Samudra Sarangi, representing Mr. Misra, said his client had not "targeted" the Prime Minister as was being alleged by Mr. Dehadrai. "My party is ideologically aligned with the BJP and the Prime Minister," Mr. Misra's counsel told the court.

TH CROSSWORD + 14158

(set by Dr. X)

To solve this puzzle online, get across to our crossword site. @ *https://qrgo.page.link/jjpTn*

SCAN TO PLAY



Across

1 Excessive consumption of alcohol in big dinner parties by star (5,8)
8 Martial arts instructor's endless wisdom (5)
9 Macho male is perhaps taking special pleasure in being dominated (9)
11 Growing trend of crash dieting is primarily ridiculous (6,4)
12 Stand by one breaking down on retirement (4)
14 New jockey crushed by mistake, getting more jittery (7)
16 Confront prince - chucked cup of tea angrily (7)
17 Clear the dirty boxes connected electrically to the ground (7)
19 Enliven proceedings at premiere with crystal meth in drink (5,2)
21 Horseman terrified to tackle rebellious Italian mount (4)
22 Not lucrative to maintain university for bird-rearing (10)
25 Male star playing lead in Chinatown as a clever dick (5,4)
26 Good deception, snaring Dravid at first slip (5)
27 Reason to visit trichologist leads to quibbling (4-9)

Down

2 Device improving air quality inside - infection is eradicated (7)
3 Endlessly kiss lady in darkness? OK! (5,5)
4 Resign from department over issue (5)
5 Cunning shown by unpleasant Aussies finally for victory (9)
6 High boot (4)
7 One enthralled by knocking back drink at a Japanese city (7)
8 Eccentricity of one on dope, overwhelmed by tension (11)
10 Outstanding work by team with precise moves (11)
13 Error found in minute - it will brighten things up! (5,5)
15 Rebuild deep love, making up after a little rift (9)
18 Rush with gun, start to attack settlement in Kiribati (7)
20 Escape in mounting commotion, stealing large carbuncle at centre (7)
23 Cause of communicable, clinical infections primarily (5)
24 Wanting a set of steps for song and dance (4)

SUDOKU

9				3				
					2	5	3	
6					4			7
		2						
	6	4	2		5	1	7	
						4		
8			6					3
	1	3	4					
				2				8

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DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★☆

Solution to previous puzzle

T	I	G	H	T	E	S	T	
I		I		W		P		U
D	A	N	C	E	T	O		N
D		K		N		R		D
L	I	G	H	T		T	H	E
Y		O		I		I		R
			T	E	N	N	I	S
B		A		T		G		T
R	O	B	T	H	E	C	R	A
A		D				H		N
S	W	I	N	G	B	A	N	D
S		C		I		N		A
A	N	A	E	M	I	C		B
R		T		M		E		L
D	I	E	S	E	L		R	E

T	A	L	C	U	M			
J		A		U				
N	O	M	I	N	A	L		
E		B		B				
T	U	N	E					
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P	L	A	Y	E	R			
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Y		C		H				
W	A	I	V	E				
H		P		A				
L	I	T	H	E	R			
E		T		T				
S	E	A	R	C	H			

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

6	4	7	2	9	1	3	5	8
2	1	5	8	3	6	7	9	4
9	3	8	5	4	7	6	2	1
5	9	6	1	8	4	2	7	3
7	8	1	6	2	3	9	4	5
3	2	4	7	5	9	8	1	6
4	5	9	3	6	2	1	8	7
8	7	3	9	1	5	4	6	2
1	6	2	4	7	8	5	3	9

FAITH

Flawless couple

We should look upon Lord Narayana and His Consort as our parents. The Dharma Sastras say that we should always treat our parents respectfully, doing our duty towards them. What then is the need to look at the Lord and Goddess Lakshmi as our parents? It is because the Divine Couple is flawless, elaborated Velukkudi Krishnan, in a discourse.

In which case, what are the flaws that our parents have? First of all, our association with our parents is due to karma. But our association with the Lord is not due to karma. It is a natural connection, which is never lost. Secondly, our parents are connected to us only in this janma. But the Divine Couple are there forever.

Thirdly, our parents have a limited role to play on this earth, in the sense that they are our parents, but not the parents of everyone on this earth. Fourthly, our parents may have negative qualities. They may not have jnana. Fifthly, there are parents who do not always do good for their children. Even parents, who may be well intentioned towards their children, sometimes end up making them miserable, like Kaikeyi, for example.

Kaikeyi did not intend to hurt Bharata. She meant well for him. But she caused him anguish, and ended up ensuring that he lived like an ascetic in Nandigrama.

INBRIEF

LTIMindtree Q4 net profit declines 1.2% to ₹1,100.7 cr.

IT services company LTIMindtree on Wednesday reported a 1.2% year-on-year decline in consolidated net profit for the March quarter to ₹1,100.7 crore, but exuded confidence it will get back to growth in the April-June period. The Q4 report card was impacted by slower ramp-ups and weak showing in the banking and financial services space. The profit (attributable to shareholders of the company) came in at ₹1,099.9 crore for the March quarter. PTI

RBI Deputy Governor Rabi Sankar gets 1-year extension

The government has extended the term of RBI Deputy Governor T. Rabi Sankar for a period of one year, the central bank said in a statement. "The Central Government has re-appointed Shri T Rabi Sankar as Deputy Governor, Reserve Bank of India, for a period of one year with effect from May 03, 2024, or until further orders, whichever is earlier," it said. Mr. Sankar was appointed as the RBI Deputy Governor in May 2021 for a period of 3 years. He joined the RBI in 1990. PTI

Hospitality major IHCL Q4 PAT rises 27% to ₹418 crore

Indian Hotels Company Ltd. (IHCL) reported consolidated net profit for the fourth quarter grew 27% to ₹418 crore from the year-earlier period. Revenue for the quarter ended March 31, 2024 increased 18% to ₹1,951 crore. For FY24, the hospitality company of the Tata Group reported 26% growth in net profit at ₹1,259 crore. Revenue grew 17% to ₹6,952 crore. The company plans to reintroduce the Gateway brand, which it said, will scale to a 100-hotel portfolio by 2030.

HUL Q4 net profit falls 6% to ₹2,406 cr. as inflation hurts

FMCG firm logs underlying sales growth of 1% amid subdued consumption trends, an absence of price growth; CEO Jawa expects demand to 'gradually improve' due to a normal monsoon

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Indicating the impact of inflation on household spending, Hindustan Unilever Ltd. (HUL) reported fourth-quarter standalone net profit declined 6% to ₹2,406 crore, from ₹2,552 crore in the year-earlier period. Sales inched up to ₹14,693 crore.

For the quarter, the fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) maker reported Underlying Sales Growth (USG) of 1% and Underlying Volume Growth (UVG) of 2%, with the company citing subdued consumption trends, an absence of price growth and urban sales leading growth.

The Beauty and Personal Care segment saw USG shrink by 2% on flat volumes. Home Care grew 1% with mid-single digit UVG.

Foods and Refreshment had a USG of 4% with flat volume growth.

For FY24, net profit rose 1.52% to ₹10,114 crore, from ₹9,962 crore. Top line grew 2.45% to ₹59,579 crore.

"In FY24 we delivered a resilient performance with 3% USG," said CEO and MD Rohit Jawa. "Looking forward, I am optimistic of consumer demand gradually improving due to a normal monsoon and better macro-economic indicators. With rising affluence, under-indexed FMCG consumption and a strong digital infrastructure, I remain very confident of the medium to long-term potential of Indian FMCG sector," Mr. Jawa added.

Slow lane
HUL reports underlying sales growth (USG) of 1% and underlying volume growth (UVG) of 2% in Q4 as rural demand eludes

- Beauty and Personal Care segment saw USG shrink by 2% on flat volumes
- Home Care grew 1% with mid-single digit UVG
- Foods and Refreshment had a USG of 4% with flat volume growth

Axis Bank turns a Q4 profit of ₹7,130 crore

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Axis Bank Ltd. reported it turned a fourth-quarter net profit of ₹7,130 crore after posting a net loss of ₹5,728.4 crore in the year-earlier period.

The bank's operating profit for the quarter rose 15% YoY to ₹10,536 crore.

NII rises
Net interest income grew 11% YoY to ₹13,089 crore. Net interest margin for Q4 stood at 4.06%. Provision and contingencies for Q4 stood at ₹1,185 crore.

The bank said it had made specific loan loss provisions of ₹832 crore.

So far, the bank holds cumulative provisions (standard and additional other than NPA) of ₹12,134 crore, CEO Amitabh Chaudhry said.

'IT sector staring at second straight year of muted revenue growth'

Press Trust of India
MUMBAI

The Indian IT services sector is staring at a second consecutive year of muted revenue growth due to modest increase in tech spends in Europe and the U.S., a domestic rating agency said on Wednesday.

Crisil Ratings said it expects the sector to grow at 5-7% in FY25, after a growth of 6% estimated to have been achieved in FY24. The overall industry size is pegged at $250 billion and it creates more than 50 lakh direct jobs.

"The slowdown in technology spend will continue this fiscal, weighing on the revenue growth of IT service providers," said Aditya Jhaver, director at Crisil.

The IT services industry is, however, expected to sustain in the key metric of profitability, as the operating profit margins will be stable at 22-23%, the agency said, attributing it to prudent management of employee costs.

RBI tells ARCs to maintain ₹300 crore in net owned fund by FY26

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Wednesday released a 'Master Direction' for Asset Reconstruction Companies (ARCs) mandating them to maintain a minimum net owned fund (NOF) of ₹300 crore in a phased manner by FY26.

The Master Direction came into effect April 24, 2024. "To commence the business of securitisation or asset reconstruction, an ARC is required to have a minimum net owned fund (NOF) of ₹300 crore and thereafter, on an ongoing basis," the RBI said.

ARCs in existence since October 11, 2022, have been provided a glide path to achieve the minimum NOF of ₹300 crore.

This meant that they hold a minimum NOF of ₹100 crore as on October 2022, ₹200 crore by March 31, 2024, and ₹300 crore by March 31, 2026.

If the ARC fails to comply, it "shall be subject to supervisory action, including prohibition on undertaking incremental business till it reaches the required minimum NOF applicable at that time," the RBI said.

An ARC shall undertake only securitisation and asset reconstruction activities and functions provided under Section 10 of the Act, the RBI said.

But ARCs with a minimum NOF of ₹1,000 crore are eligible to function as Resolution Applicants under the IBC, it added.

MARKETS

MARKET WATCH

	WEDNESDAY	% CHANGE
Sensex	73,853	0.16
US Dollar	83.33	-0.02
Gold	72,610	0.56
Brent oil	87.21	-0.42

NIFTY 50

	PRICE	CHANGE
Adani Enter	3043.55	-21.55
Adani Ports	1320.50	-1.60
Apollo Hosp	6283.35	88.45
Asian Paints	2867.75	-7.15
Axis Bank	1063.25	7.50
Bajaj Auto	8697.10	-98.70
Bajaj Finserv	1630.35	9.25
Bajaj Finance	7329.15	69.25
Bharti Airtel	1336.40	-5.95
BPCL	593.35	0.35
Britannia Ind	4828.95	31.15
Cipla	1398.20	51.50
Coal India	443.85	2.90
Divis Lab	3813.80	45.15
Dr Reddys Lab	5950.80	-1.30
Eicher Motors	4530.70	10.55
Grasim Ind	2337.75	-32.40
HCL Tech	1479.25	-7.40
HDFC Bank	1511.70	4.10
HDFC Life	594.20	-6.95
Hero MotoCorp	4393.35	48.30
Hindalco	636.10	24.30
Hind Unilever	2260.25	-2.50
ICICI Bank	1096.75	6.50
IndusInd Bank	1474.65	0.15
Infosys	1430.75	-11.65
ITC	428.90	-0.30
JSW Steel	882.70	31.35
Kotak Bank	1842.80	29.75
L&T	3634.85	24.70
LTIMindtree Ltd.	4726.80	3.40
M&M	2058.45	-4.15
Maurti Suzuki	12944.05	-52.20
NestleIndia	2500.15	-1.10
NTPC	351.65	4.50
ONGC	279.35	2.55
PowerGrid Corp	290.40	5.05
Reliance Ind	2900.35	-18.30
SBI Life	1460.05	-9.80
State Bank	773.10	0.10
Shriram Finance Ltd.	2461.05	34.10
Sun Pharma	1485.75	1.10
TataConsumerProduct	1110.15	-63.20
Tata Motors	991.65	4.90
Tata Steel	165.55	4.40
TCS	3831.05	-43.65
Tech Mahindra	1185.70	-14.55
Titan	3609.75	-23.25
UltraTech Cement	9658.85	125.30
Wipro	459.90	-2.20

EXCHANGE RATES

Indicative direct rates in rupees a unit except yen at 4 p.m. on April 24

CURRENCY	TT BUY	TT SELL
US Dollar	83.12	83.44
Euro	88.86	89.20
British Pound	103.41	103.82
Japanese Yen (100)	53.65	53.86
Chinese Yuan	11.47	11.52
Swiss Franc	90.94	91.29
Singapore Dollar	61.07	61.32
Canadian Dollar	60.77	61.02
Malaysian Ringitt	17.40	17.47
Australian Dollar	54.05	54.27

Source:Indian Bank

TCS ties up with AWS to provide gen AI customer solutions

The Hindu Bureau
MUMBAI

Tata Consultancy Services Ltd (TCS) said it had entered into a tie-up with Amazon Web Services (AWS) to scale its customers' cloud transformation.

"This new strategic transformation agreement with AWS will enable TCS to facilitate full-stack digital transformation of its customers by leveraging data and generative artificial intelligence (AI) solutions on AWS," TCS said.

Multi-year tie-up
Through this multi-year tie-up, TCS will provide its customers with tools to create modern architectures, deliver business value using state-of-the-art cloud-native capabilities and drive modernization at scale, it added.

"These include a clear cloud modernisation roadmap, access to modernisation platforms and tools, exclusive investment models and technology betas, and proof-of-concept (POC) projects," TCS added.

Banking and finance
Customers selected for this program are globally distributed across verticals, particularly within banking and financial services, life sciences, healthcare, travel, transportation, hospitality, manufacturing, automotive, communications and telecom, TCS said.

e-bike firm Ultraviolette to raise $100 mn to fund market expansion

Mini Tejaswi
BENGALURU

Electric bike maker Ultraviolette said it is set to raise a fresh funding of $100 million, which will be used in expanding markets in India and across the globe.

Niraj Rajmohan, CTO & co-founder, Ultraviolette, told The Hindu that the company was in the final rounds of talks with a couple of private equity players and a fresh raise of $100 million was expected to be closed in the next six months. "We are talking with a couple of private equity players to raise around $100 million and it is expected to close in six months," he added.

The Bengaluru-based firm had already raised $55 million so far from a clutch of investors including TVS Motor Company, EXOR Capital, Qualcomm Ventures, Zoho, Gofrugal Tech, and Speciale Invest.

The company on Wednesday unveiled F77 MACH 2, an "advanced performance and intelligent electric motorcycle."

REITs, InvITs mobilised ₹1.3 lakh cr. over the last 4 years, RBI data shows

Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Investment vehicles for realty and infrastructure sectors – REITs and InvITs – have garnered ₹1.3 lakh crore in the past four years till March-end, and are expected to facilitate more pooled funds, central bank officials observed in an article in the April edition of the RBI Bulletin.

Experts and stakeholders are of the view that with India growing at a fast pace, REITs and InvITs are emerging as alternative investment instruments, especially for high net-worth individuals. "India has been a late adopter of real estate investment trusts (REITs) and infrastructure investment trusts (InvITs)," the RBI officials wrote in an article on 'State of Economy'. "However, the market is flourishing," they added.

Changing landscape: As India grows at a fast pace, REITs, InvITs are emerging as alternative investment instruments. FILE PHOTO

March witnessed the listing of an InvIT, which raised ₹2,500 crore via public issue attracting substantial interest from foreign investors. The RBI noted that SEBI had progressively reduced the minimum investment size and trading lot, enabling greater retail participation in the hybrid instruments.

'Pooled investment'
To further develop this space, SEBI notified regulations for small and medium REITs on March 8.

"This is expected to facilitate pooled investment in a wider range of real estate assets as a regulated financial product, thereby facilitating further growth of REITs in India," the article authors led by RBI deputy governor Michael Debabrata Patra observed.

STRASBOURG

EU lawmakers agree to withdraw from treaty over climate fears

AFP

The European Parliament on Wednesday backed the EU's withdrawal from an international energy treaty over concerns it offers too much protection to fossil fuel companies. The European Commission had reasoned in July that the treaty is "no longer compatible" with the bloc's "enhanced climate ambition". AFP

BANGKOK

Danger warning issued for Bangkok as extreme heat bites

AFP

Thai authorities issued an extreme heat warning for Bangkok on Wednesday, urging people to stay indoors as temperatures soared. The mercury was forecast to hit 39 degree Celsius in the sprawling Thai capital, while the heat index rose above 52 degree Celsius, classed as "extremely dangerous" by city authorities. AFP

MOSCOW

Church suspends priest who held Navalny's memorial service

REUTERS

Dmitry Safronov, a priest who oversaw a memorial on March 26 for late Russian Opposition leader Alexei Navalny, has been suspended for three years by the head of the country's Orthodox Church. An order published on Tuesday demoted Mr. Safronov from his position as priest to that of a psalm-reader. AP

KATHMANDU

Nepal's President asks Al Thani to help free hostage held by Hamas

PTI

Ram Chandra Poudel, Nepal's President asked Sheik Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, the emir of Qatar, who is on a two-day visit to the South Asian country, to help release a Nepali student held hostage by Hamas, officials said on Wednesday. Mr. Al Thani said he would do everything possible to help release the student held in Gaza. AP

Israel pummels Gaza after U.S. Congress approves aid

Senate's approval of the $13 billion aid package sent a 'strong message to all our enemies', says Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz; fears are rising that Israel will soon launch an assault on Rafah

Agence France-Presse
GAZA STRIP

Israel pounded Gaza with air strikes and artillery fire in its war against Hamas on Wednesday after the U.S. Congress approved $13 billion in military aid.

Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz said the Senate's approval of the aid package already passed by the House of Representatives sent a "strong message to all our enemies" in a post on social media platform X.

U.S.-Israeli relations been strained by Israel's conduct of the war in Gaza and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's determination to send troops into the southern Gazan city of Rafah, where 1.5 million people are sheltering, many in makeshift encampments.

Fears are rising that Israel will soon launch an assault on Rafah, which it says is the "last" major Hamas stronghold, but aid groups warn any invasion would create an "apocalyptic situation".

Wiped out: Destroyed buildings in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas. AFP

Early on Wednesday, hospital and security sources in Gaza reported Israeli air strikes in Rafah, as well as the central Nuseirat refugee camp.

Heavy bombardment of several areas of northern Gaza during the night was reported, while the Israeli military said its aircraft "struck over 50 targets" over the previous 24 hours.

Mr. Netanyahu, however, has insisted the assault on Rafah will go ahead.

Citing Egyptian officials briefed on the Israeli plans, the *Wall Street Journal* said Israel was planning to move civilians from Rafah to nearby Khan Yunis over a period of two to three weeks.

Satellite images shared by Maxar Technologies showed new blocks of tents that had been set up in recent weeks in southern Gaza.

The *Journal* reported that Israel would then send troops into Rafah gradually, targeting areas where Hamas leaders are thought to be hiding in an operation expected to last six weeks.

Ismail al-Thawabta, head of the Hamas government media office, said an invasion would be a "crime" and that central Gaza and Khan Yunis "cannot accommodate the numbers of displaced people in Rafah".

The war began with an unprecedented Hamas attack on October 7 that resulted in the deaths of around 1,170 people.

In retaliation, Israel launched a military offensive that has killed at least 34,262 people in Gaza, mostly women and children, according to the Hamas-run territory's Health Ministry.

Ranil bats for Global South during Iran President's visit

Meera Srinivasan
COLOMBO

The Global South must strive for its strength and autonomy, Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe said on Wednesday, even as he thanked his Iranian counterpart Ebrahim Raisi, who inaugurated a key power and irrigation project in the island nation.

Expressing "gratitude to Iran for their technical support", Mr. Wickremesinghe emphasised that without Iran's assistance, Sri Lanka would not be able to execute the crucial $514-million irrigation project. Consequent to the project, around 6,000 hectares of agricultural land in three southern and central districts will receive water supply, his office said. Further, the project is expected to generate and add 120 MW to the national grid.

Mr. Wickremesinghe's pitch for greater autonomy for the Global South came amid media reports in Sri Lanka of "Western pressure" on Colombo. Mr. Raisi landed in Sri Lanka 10 days after Iran launched an unprecedented missile and drone attack on Israel, retaliating against the April 1 air strike on the Iranian embassy compound in Damascus. While the two sides appear to have backed off from a regional conflict for now, tensions remain high, with Israel continuing its attack on Gaza. During his just concluded three-day visit to Pakistan, President Raisi warned Israel that "nothing will be left of the Zionist regime" if Tel Aviv attacks Iran again.

Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe with his Iranian counterpart Ebrahim Raisi in Colombo. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

Meanwhile, the Sri Lankan government announced the signing of five agreements with Iran. Sri Lanka has pledged to expand bilateral ties and development cooperation with the West Asian country, and expressed interest to tap its expertise in the energy, water, agriculture, nanotechnology, pharmaceutical and biotechnology sectors. In February, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian visited Colombo and expressed satisfaction over the barter trade agreement under which Iran supplies crude oil to Sri Lanka, in return for tea. The two countries also agreed to explore trading in Asian currencies instead of U.S. dollars.

U.S. sent ATACMS missiles to Ukraine

Associated Press
WASHINGTON

The United States sent long-range ATACMS missiles to Ukraine for use inside its territory, and the weapons arrived in the country this month, the State Department said on Wednesday.

"I can confirm that the United States provided Ukraine with long-range ATACMS at the President's direct direction," State Department spokesperson Vedant Patel told presspersons.

The weapons were part of a March aid package for Ukraine, not the one just approved by Congress and signed by President Joe Biden, but "we did not announce this at the onset in order to maintain operational security for Ukraine at their request," Mr. Patel said, adding that the "missiles arrived in Ukraine this month".

The White House has previously confirmed that the U.S. sent a shorter-range variant of ATACMS to Ukraine.

Blinken in China seeking pressure, but also stability

Agence France-Presse
SHANGHAI

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken returned on Wednesday to China on his second visit in a year, as the United States ramps up pressure on its rival over its support for Russia while also seeking to manage tensions with Beijing.

The U.S. diplomat will meet China's top brass on Friday in Beijing, where he is also expected to plead for restraint as Taiwan inaugurates a new leader, and to raise concerns on Chinese trade practices – a vital issue for President Joe Biden in an election year.

Necessary education

Defending rights: Students protest for public university funding and against austerity measures proposed by President Javier Milei, in Argentina on Tuesday. The posters carried slogans like "With fascism, there are no rights" and "Why so much fear to educate the people?". AP

Argentina seeks arrest of Iran Minister over '94 blast

Agence France-Presse
BUENOS AIRES

Argentina has asked Interpol to arrest Iran's Interior Minister over the 1994 bombing of a Jewish community centre in Buenos Aires that killed 85 people, the Foreign Ministry said on Tuesday.

The Foreign Ministry said the Iranian Minister, Ahmad Vahidi, was part of a delegation from Tehran visiting Pakistan and Sri Lanka, and Interpol has issued a red notice seeking his arrest at the request of Argentina.

Argentina has also asked those two governments to arrest Mr. Vahidi, it added in a statement.

'Not part of delegation'

But Iran's official news agency *IRNA* reported that Mr. Vahidi was back in Iran on Tuesday, where he attended a ceremony to induct a provincial governor.

An official from Sri Lanka's Foreign Ministry said that Mr. Vahidi was not listed as part of an Iranian delegation that arrived in the country on Wednesday.

Ahmad Vahidi

On April 12, a court in Argentina placed blame on Iran for the 1994 attack against the AMIA Jewish community centre in Buenos Aires and for a bombing two years earlier against the Israeli Embassy, which killed 29 people.

The 1994 assault has never been claimed or solved, but Argentina and Israel have long suspected the Iran-backed group Hezbollah carried it out at Iran's request.

Prosecutors have charged top Iranian officials with ordering the attack, though Tehran has denied any involvement.

The court also implicated Hezbollah and called the attack against the AMIA – the deadliest in Argentina's history – a "crime against humanity".

Key masterminds

Tuesday's statement from the Foreign Ministry said: "Argentina seeks the international arrest of those responsible for the AMIA attack of 1994, which killed 85 people, and who remain in their positions with total impunity."

"One of them is Ahmad Vahidi, sought by Argentine justice as one of those responsible for the attack against AMIA," said the statement, which was co-signed by the Security Ministry.

Argentina has previously stated that Mr. Vahidi, a former senior member of Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps, is one of the key masterminds of the AMIA bombing and sought his extradition.

Columbia University cites 'progress' with Gaza protesters

Associated Press
NEW YORK

Columbia University said early on Wednesday that it was making "important progress" with pro-Palestinian student protesters who set up a tent encampment and that it was extending a deadline to clear out, yet stand-offs remained tense on the Ivy League campus in upper Manhattan.

Student protesters "have committed to dismantling and removing a significant number of tents," the university said. A smaller encampment remained on campus on Wednesday morning.

Protesters at California State Polytechnic University, Humboldt, some 480 km north of San Francisco, started using furniture, tents, chains and zip ties to block the building's entrances on Monday.

Both campuses are part of intensifying demonstrations over Israel's war with Hamas by university students demanding that schools cut financial ties to Israel and divest from companies that are enabling its months-long conflict. Dozens have been arrested on charges of trespassing or disorderly conduct.

Columbia president Minouche Shafik on Tuesday set a midnight deadline to reach an agreement with students to clear the encampment, or "we will have to consider alternative options".

Russian Minister held over graft charges

Agence France-Presse
MOSCOW

Timur Ivanov, a Russian deputy Defence Minister exposed in an investigation by late Opposition leader Alexei Navalny's team was remanded in custody on Wednesday on suspicion of taking large bribes.

The arrest of Ivanov, a long-time ally of Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu, is the most dramatic corruption case in Russia in recent years. It comes as spending on the military has ballooned amid its offensive on Ukraine.

Ivanov oversaw construction and procurement for the armed forces, and was linked to Russia's high-profile rebuilding of the Ukrainian city of Mariupol, occupied by Moscow's forces.

He faces up to 15 years in prison for bribe-taking, it added. Ivanov denies the charges, his lawyer told the state-run *TASS* news agency.

THRISSUR CORPORATION
ELECTRICITY DEPARTMENT
ED1-961/24 Dated : 24.04.2024
e-Tender Notice
A pole 12 mts &
Steel Post-11 mts
www.tced.in
log on to :
www.etenders.kerala.gov.in
Last Date : 15.05.2024
(Sd/-) Assistant Secretary

GOVERNMENT OF RAJASTHAN
OFFICE OF THE ADDITIONAL CHIEF ENGINEER WATER RESOURCES ZONE JAIPUR
No. 1702 Date: 15/4/24
Corrigendum-1
E-NIT No-31/2023-24
With reference to the Bid invited for "Rehabilitation of Bharatpur Feeder System District Bharatpur RWSLIP" work vide office letter no 1365 dated 14.03.2024 of this office, has been extended due to indispensable reason upto 13.05.2024 at 6:00 PM and technical bid will be open on dated 14.05.2024 at 3:00 PM
Other particulars of the bid may be visited on the procurement portal (http://eproc.rajasthan.gov.in, http://sppp.raj.nic.in) of the state.
NIB no: WRD2324A0718
UBN no: WRD2324WLOB02186
RO. No. 3111
DIPR/C/3408
Additional Chief Engineer
Water Resources Zone
Jaipur

MARCUS' DAY OUT

Stoinis registers highest individual score in IPL run chase history

M. VEDHAN

Lucknow Super Giants' Marcus Stoinis registered the highest score (124 n.o.) in a run-chase in the IPL, against CSK in Chennai on Tuesday. The Australian's knock is also the second-best by a Super Giants batter, behind Quinton de Kock's unbeaten 140 against Kolkata Knight Riders in 2022.

IMPACT PLAYER RULE

Entertaining cricket, but takes all-rounders out of game: Voges

SPORTZPICS/IPL

LSG consultant Adam Voges, joining the debate on the Impact Players rule, said he prefers something like the 'Power Surge' rule in the Australian Big Bash League where the batting team gets to decide a two-over phase of fielding restrictions. "Certainly makes for entertaining cricket, but it takes the all-rounders out of the game."

GO FOR BROKE

Fearless attitude at the top is contagious: SRH coach Vettori

SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Sunrisers Hyderabad head coach Daniel Vettori said that they need to keep challenging themselves and keep scoring big totals. "Yes, the fearless attitude is contagious given the quality of Travis Head and Abhishek Sharma at the top. Pat Cummins is always well prepared. He has a strong ability to read the game," said Vettori.

A STRUGGLE

Tough for the bowlers on good wickets and small grounds: Jacks

R. RAGU

Royal Challengers Bengaluru's Will Jacks said it was harsh on the bowlers while playing on good wickets and small grounds. "We struggled with the new ball and did not take wickets in PowerPlay. We then found it hard to defend totals. The bowlers definitely have plans and have to execute them well," Jacks said.

Pant packs a punch as Capitals edge Titans in a high-scoring humdinger

The Delhi skipper's blistering, unbeaten 88 and Axar's knock is matched by a gallant reply from fellow southpaws Sai Sudharsan and Miller

IPL-17

Anish Pathiyil
NEW DELHI

It was a day to rejoice for left-hand batters at the Arun Jaitley Stadium on Wednesday where Delhi Capitals beat the Gujarat Titans by four runs in a nail-biting finish and maintain its playoff qualification hopes.

After the heroics of Rishabh Pant (88, 43b, 5x4, 8x6) and Axar Patel (66, 43b, 5x4, 4x6) helped the host score 224, B. Sai Sudharsan (65, 39b, 7x4, 2x6) and David Miller (55, 23b, 6x4, 3x6) kept DC on its toes before the visitor fell agonisingly short of scaling a big total.

The Titans' chase faced an early setback when captain Shubman Gill lofted one to Axar at mid-on, but Wriddhiman Saha and Sai Sudharsan kept the pressure on, scoring at a fair clip in the PowerPlay.

Sai Sudharsan used the favourable match-up against Axar to keep the runs flowing after the introduction of spin. Saha perished for a 25-ball 39, trying to hit Kuldeep Yadav over cover and Azmatullah Omarzai departed soon after, falling to Axar.

Pacer Rasikh Salam then dented GT's hopes further by removing Sai Sudharsan and the dangerous Shahrukh Khan – the latter falling to a brilliant catch by Pant.

However, Miller's blitzkrieg and cameos from Rashid Khan and R. Sai Kishore ensured the butterflies in the crowd's gut remained till the last ball.

Swing and no miss! Pant underlined his growing confidence with a boundary-studded knock against Titans. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

Earlier in the day, DC opener Jake Fraser-McGurk continued his modus operandi of blistering starts, taking the attack to Sandeep Warrier.

The Tamil Nadu bowler stuck to his plans and an astute positioning of the square leg fielder brought out the Australian's downfall. Warrier ensured Titans would finish the PowerPlay on top, removing Prithvi Shaw and Shai Hope.

With the Afghan spin twins Rashid and Noor Ahmad coming into play, Pant and Axar ensured they weren't pinned down, counter-attacking the duo en route to a 113-run stand.

Axar eventually fell to Noor, handing a simple catch to Sai Kishore while trying to loft one over long-on.

At the other end, Pant's onslaught against Mohit Sharma continued through to the final over, hammering 31 runs to hand the latter the unwanted record of bowling the most expensive spell in the IPL (4-0-73-0) whilst taking Capitals to a total that proved just enough.

SCOREBOARD

DELHI CAPITALS
Prithvi Shaw c Noor b Warrier 11 *(7b, 2x4)*, Jake Fraser-McGurk c Noor b Warrier 23 *(14b, 2x4, 2x6)*, Axar Patel c Sai Kishore b Noor 66 *(43b, 5x4, 4x6)*, Shai Hope c Rashid b Warrier 5 *(6b, 1x4)*, Rishabh Pant (not out) 88 *(43b, 5x4, 8x6)*, Tristan Stubbs (not out) 26 *(7b, 3x4, 2x6)*; Extras (lb-2, w-3): 5; Total (for four wkts. in 20 overs): 224.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-35 (Fraser-McGurk, 3.2 overs), 2-36 (Shaw, 3.5), 3-44 (Hope, 5.4), 4-157 (Axar, 16.6).

TITANS BOWLING
Omarzai 4-0-33-0, Warrier 3-0-15-3, Rashid 4-0-35-0, Noor 3-0-36-1, Mohit 4-0-73-0, Shahrukh 1-0-8-0, Sai Kishore 1-0-22-0.

GUJARAT TITANS
Wriddhiman Saha c Axar b Kuldeep 39 *(25b, 5x4, 1x6)*, Shubman Gill c Axar b Nortje 6 *(5b, 1x4)*, B. Sai Sudharsan **(Impact player in place of Warrier)** c Axar b Rasikh 65 *(39b, 7x4, 2x6)*, Azmatullah Omarzai c Fraser-McGurk b Axar 1 *(2b)*, David Miller c Rasikh b Mukesh 55 *(23b, 6x4, 3x6)*, M. Shahrukh Khan c Pant b Rasikh 8 *(5b, 1x6)*, Rahul Tewatia c Pant b Kuldeep 4 *(5b)*, Rashid Khan (not out) 21 *(11b, 3x4, 1x6)*, R. Sai Kishore b Rasikh 13 *(6b, 2x6)*, Mohit Sharma (not out) 0 *(0b)*; Extras (lb-4, nb-1, w-3): 8; Total (for eight wkts. in 20 overs): 220.

FALL OF WICKETS
1-13 (Gill, 1.3), 2-95 (Saha, 9.4), 3-98 (Omarzai, 10.1), 4-121 (Sudharsan, 12.4), 5-139 (Shahrukh, 14.1), 6-152 (Tewatia, 15.6), 7-181 (Miller, 17.3), 8-206 (Sai Kishore, 18.6).

CAPITALS BOWLING
Khaleel 2-0-26-0, Nortje 3-0-48-1, Rasikh **(Impact Player in place of Shaw)** 4-0-44-3, Mukesh 4-0-41-1, Axar 3-0-28-1, Kuldeep 4-0-29-2.

Toss: Gujarat Titans.

Player-of-the-Match: Rishabh Pant.

Capitals won by four runs.

Next assignment

DC: April 27 vs **MI** Delhi, 3.30 p.m.

GT: April 28 vs **RCB** Ahmedabad, 3.30 p.m.

Points table

	M	W	L	PTS	NRR
Rajasthan Royals	8	7	1	14	0.698
Kolkata Knight Riders	7	5	2	10	1.206
Sunrisers Hyderabad	7	5	2	10	0.914
Lucknow Super Giants	8	5	3	10	0.148
Chennai Super Kings	8	4	4	8	0.415
Delhi Capitals	9	4	5	8	-0.386
Gujarat Titans	9	4	5	8	-0.974
Mumbai Indians	8	3	5	6	-0.227
Punjab Kings	8	2	6	4	-0.292
Royal Challengers	8	1	7	2	-1.046

RCB has its task cut out against an aggressive Sunrisers

Getting ready: SRH skipper Cummins, head coach Vettori and pacer Natarajan at the practice session on Wednesday. R. RAGU

V.V. Subrahmanyam
HYDERABAD

An in-form Sunrisers Hyderabad will host a struggling Royal Challengers Bengaluru, which has lost seven of its eight games, at the Rajiv Gandhi Stadium here on Thursday.

The SRH openers Travis Head and Abhishek Sharma have been giving such flying starts that it has become like a walk in the park for the likes of Aiden Markram, Heinrich Klaasen, Nithish Kumar Reddy, Abdul Samad.

The fact that someone like the explosive Glen Phillips is watching, from the dug-out, his teammates come up with some unbelievable stroke-play is proof of the kind of depth SRH has as it chases the goal of making it to the play-offs. The host now has 10 points from seven games.

On a wicket which is predicted to be a perfect IPL strip for a high-scoring game, it could be a daunting task for Royal Challengers, for which it has been a disappointing season so far, to raise the bar under pressure.

With the exception of Virat Kohli at the top and Dinesh Karthik down the order, none of the other batters have showed the desired consistency. In bowling too, there has been nothing much to rave about Faf du Plessis' team and the lack of a quality spinner has been telling on its fortunes.

It needs to be seen if there will be a change in the script for RCB on Thursday.

Today's match

SUNRISERS vs RCB

Hyderabad, 7.30 P.M.

HEAD-TO-HEAD
Played: **23**
SRH 13 | RCB 10

PREVIOUS MEETING
SRH won by 25 runs, 2024

LIVE ON STAR SPORTS 1 (SD & HD) & JIO CINEMA

I am happy in my own world, says Axar

Amol Karhadkar
NEW DELHI

He is among the most underrated performers in Indian cricket, across formats. Perhaps because of his unfortunate knack of getting injured ahead of marquee assignments. But Axar Patel has learned to take it into his stride.

"You look at my World Cup record or a major series, it's always an injury at the wrong time that forces me on the sidelines. I am just not going to think about all these things for now," Axar says with a smile on his face.

The Delhi Capitals all-rounder appears to have overcome the quadriceps injury sustained during the Asia Cup in September that forced his withdrawal from India's squad for the 2023 ODI World Cup. No wonder he is not looking too far ahead as another World Cup – this time in the shortest format – lurks around.

At peace: Axar is focused on making the most of the present and not thinking too far ahead. SHIV KUMAR PUSHPAKAR

"It is tough dealing with an injury at an inopportune time, but I am used to it since it's been happening for the last two-three years. I am happy in my own world and my own space. I am not trying to pressurise myself into preparing for the World Cup, but instead remain in the present and see how I can optimise my performance."

Despite friendly conditions and rules, Axar has managed to stifle the batters. Besides Jasprit Bumrah, he is the only one to have bowled at least 10 overs this IPL and conceded less than seven runs an over.

"I keep thinking about executing my plan. Even then, after pitching it where I had planned, if he still hits it out of the park, I am fine with it."

'Trying to find the right combination'

S. Prasanna Venkatesan
CHENNAI

Chennai Super Kings has been tinkering with its team combination. Speaking about it, coach Stephen Fleming said: "We're a little bit uncomfortable in some areas. So, we're just trying to find, not a quick fix but the right combination, and where players are going to contribute for the back-end of this tournament the most.

"We've got another change coming up with Mustafizur Rahman (who will fly back for National duty) in a couple of games. So we're just trying to prepare and get a side that will give us a run home.

"We've had injuries. We've been a little bit unsettled.

"But the main thing is getting guys in key areas and in form. And that sometimes takes a bit of time," said Fleming.

Unsettled Super Kings will need to get its act together, and fast

S. Dipak Ragav
CHENNAI

Defending champion Chennai Super Kings finds itself in a spot of bother following its second consecutive defeat against Lucknow Super Giants on Tuesday. With this reverse, Super Kings have just four wins from eight games.

CSK has struggled on the road, losing three out of the four games. On Tuesday, the Chennai side suffered its first defeat on home soil this year, which has left the five-time champion in a precarious situation. Ruturaj Gaikwad's men might need to win four out of the remaining six games to progress further.

The Yellow Brigade is known for backing its players longer than most teams in the competition, but over the last few games, it has made many changes as key players are out of form. It is a sign of instability, and coach Stephen Fleming conceded that the team is unsettled.

Lone warrior: CSK's pacers have been blowing hot and cold, barring Pathirana. M. VEDHAN

With the top-order – barring Ruturaj and Shivam Dube – woefully out of form and the pacers blowing hot and cold except Matheesha Pathirana, CSK has serious issues that need addressing immediately.

It has not helped that the team's spin attack isn't effective either. The pitch at Chepauk has not helped the tweakers and forced the Chennai side out of its comfort zone against LSG. With heavy dew making it easy for batting in the second innings, CSK had to rely on pacers, who leaked runs.

"There's not much assistance; we have had one pitch which turned, and we won comfortably. I would like more synergy between the pitch and what we're trying to do. I unashamedly say it's your home ground, and you must defend and pick teams accordingly. So, when it's out of sync, you find it very difficult, so it's not quite right yet," rued Fleming about the lack of help for his spinners on home soil.

"But we just have to be good enough to play on what's in front of us and make sure we're good enough to win, and we have been. We have Pathirana, and Fizz has been very good, especially when it's slow. But we've got a spin department that has become redundant, and I'd love that to change," he added.

INBRIEF

Bolt named ICC Men's T20 World Cup ambassador

The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Wednesday named Jamaican sprint legend and eight-time Olympic gold medallist Usain Bolt as the ambassador of the T20 World Cup to be played in the West Indies and USA from June 1 to 29. "I am thrilled to be an ambassador for the upcoming ICC Men's T20 World Cup. Coming from the Caribbean where cricket is a part of life, the sport has always held a special place in my heart," said Bolt.

Nadal to play French Open only if he 'feels competitive'

Rafael Nadal said on Wednesday he will only play at the upcoming French Open if he "feels competitive". "If I arrive in Paris the way I feel today, I will not play," the 14-time Roland Garros champion said at the Madrid Open. "I will play Roland Garros if I feel competitive. If I can play, I play. If I can't play, I can't."

Prakaash Sarran cruises into the semifinals

Prakaash Sarran defeated Nived Ponnapa 6-1, 6-0 in the boys' quarterfinals of the NuWare Asian Ranking under-16 tennis tournament at the Topspin Tennis Academy courts in Bengaluru on Wednesday.

Other results (quarterfinals): Boys: Anurag Shourya bt Shardul Khawale 6-1, 6-2; Tejas Ravi bt Levin Safoor 4-6, 6-4, 6-4; **Girls:** Sahivi Gaurav bt G.D. Meghana 6-4, 6-4; Anvi Punaganti bt Kashvi Sunil 6-3, 7-5; Aahida Singh bt Dharini Gowda 7-5, 6-0; Deepshika Vinayagamurthy bt Pooja Nagraj 4-1 (retd.).

Uganda names Abhay Sharma as coach ahead of T20 WC

Uganda Cricket Association (UCA) on Tuesday named former Indian First Class player Abhay Sharma as the new head coach of the men's national team in the run-up to the T20 World Cup. The Cricket Cranes have booked their place in the competition for the first time and will be among 20 teams at the tournament being jointly hosted by USA and the West Indies from June 1. The UCA announced Abhay's appointment on a three-year working contract in a statement on its website, saying he brought a "wealth of knowledge and expertise".. Abhay has previous coaching stints with India-A and India Under-19, as well as the Indian women's team and the Delhi Ranji Trophy team, the UCA said.

LIVE TELECAST

IPL: Star Sports 1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema, 7.30 p.m.
Pakistan vs New Zealand: 4th T20I, FanCode, 8 p.m.
Serie A: Sports 18-1 (SD & HD) & Jio Cinema, 11.30 p.m.
Premier League: SS Select 1 (SD & HD) & Hotstar, 12.30 a.m. (Friday)

A fighting Mumbai City FC records an incredible comeback victory

Down 0-2 in the 56th minute, the Islanders keep it late to show their best, scoring three goals in seven minutes against FC Goa

ISL

Aneesh Dey
MARGAO

Mumbai City FC fought till the end and clinched an incredible comeback victory, defeating FC Goa 3-2 in the semifinal first leg of the Indian Super League (ISL-10) at the Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium on Wednesday.

The Gaurs broke the deadlock in the 16th minute when Boris Singh tapped home a simple cross from Mohammad Yasir. Trailing 0-1 at the start of the second-half, Mumbai's urgency to score the equaliser was evident.

However, Brandon Fernandes inflicted further damage on Mumbai in the 56th minute. Running into space, he curled the ball into the far corner, past Phurba Lachenpa, who dived at full stretch but could not get his hand to the ball.

Man of the moment: Chhangte was the saviour for Mumbai City, scoring twice towards the end. ISL

Leading 2-0 at home and seeing their opponent struggling, it seemed like a straightforward day at the office for the Gaurs, but the Islanders have made a name for themselves because of their habit of not giving up, and they kept it late to show their best, scoring three goals in seven minutes.

In the 90th minute, Lallianzuala Chhangte pulled a goal back, showing excellent composure to find the net after receiving a perfectly weighted through-ball from Jayesh Rane.

Getting seven minutes of stoppage time, Mumbai had time to push for equaliser, and it got it through Vikram Partap Singh, who was in the right place at the right time to score from the rebound after Goa goalkeeper Dheeraj Singh saved the initial shot from substitute Gurkirat Singh.

While a 2-2 comeback would have been impressive enough, Mumbai took it a notch further to steal the match from the Gaurs in front of their home fans.

In the seventh minute of stoppage time, Rane and Chhangte combined again, with the latter taking a touch to control the ball inside the box and smashing it inside the net to complete the comeback.

The result:
FC Goa 2 (Boris 16, Brandon 56) lost to Mumbai City FC 3 (Chhangte 90, 90+6, Vikram 90+1).

Akshay Dhere and Sahil Kundu rally to post fine victories

FED CUP WRESTLING

Y.B. Sarangi
VARANASI

Young wrestler Akshay Dhere rallied to record a brilliant victory in the 57kg final against Parmod Kumar and win his maiden elite title in the Federation Cup on Wednesday. Dhere, a National junior bronze medallist in 2022, pinned Parmod to corner glory in one of the few exciting freestyle contests in an otherwise lacklustre day.

Parmod grabbed an early 4-0 lead, but Dhere worked patiently to break his opponent's resistance to make it 4-4 in the first period. A swift double-leg attack and leg lace put the 21-year-old Armyman from Kolhapur ahead at 8-4. He carried on the momentum to perform another takedown and eventually pin down Parmod with two minutes left.

Perfect end: Akshay, left, pinned down Parmod with just two minutes left. SANDEEP SAXENA

In another neck-and-neck fight, National silver medallist Sahil Kundu (61kg) recovered from a 2-4 deficit to beat Amit 17-7 in a high scoring final bout.

Meanwhile, seven of the eight candidates in the fray won the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) athletes commission elections. They were Sahil, Smitha A.S., Bharti Baghel, Narsingh Yadav, Kushboo Pawar, Nikki and Sweta Dubey. Narsingh was elected chairman of the athletes' commission.

The medallists: Men: Freestyle: 57kg: 1. Akshay Dhere (Mah), 2. Parmod Kumar (Chd), 3. Rohit (Har), Janardhan Yadav (UP); **61kg:** 1. Sahil Kundu (Har), 2. Amit (Del), 3. Lalit Kaushal (MP), Manoj (Raj); **65kg:** 1. Atul (Har), 2. Manish Goswami (Del), 3. Deepanshu (Chd), Sonba Gongane (Mah); **70kg:** 1. Shubham (UP), 2. Mahesh Langoti (Kar), 3. Pankaj Kumar (Del), Rohit Prajapati (MP); **74kg:** 1. Sunny (Del), 2. Tejveer (UP), 3. Rohan Narayan Ghevodi (Kar), Naveen (Har); **79kg:** 1. Sahil Dalal (Har), 2. Mandeep (Raj), 3. Akshay (Mah), Sadashiv Nalavade (Kar).

86kg: 1. Ashish (Del), 2. Gopal Koli (Kar), 3. Partham Dalal (Har), Vijenderpal Singh (Chg); **92kg:** 1. Amit Singh (Del), 2. Vishal Kumar (UP), 3. Vijay (Har), Ajay (HP); **97kg:** 1. Omkar Chaugule (Mah), 2. Hari (Chd), 3. Aman (Har), Basavaraj Patil (Kar); **125kg:** 1. Lakshay (Del), 2. Gurbaj Singh (Pun), 3. Sachin Panwar (Chd), Saket Yadav (Mah).

Cue Sports Premier League in Bengaluru from May 4

Sports Bureau
BENGALURU

The Cue Sports Premier League (CSPL), a national-level snooker tournament, will commence at Bowring Institute here on May 4.

Multiple-time world champion Pankaj Advani, Aditya Mehta, Sourav Kothari and women's champion Vidya Pillai will feature in the first edition of CSPL, it was announced at a press conference here on Wednesday.

A total of 56 players, selected via auction, will compete in this tournament.

Lightning Legion, Cyclone Crusaders, Summer Tuskers, Hurricane Hawks, Thunderstorm Titans, Tornado Tigers, Whirlwind Warriors and Monsoon Mavericks are the teams in the competition.

"The CSPL is a unique event which is aimed at integrating players of three different categories - national, state and club levels.

Advani. ANI

"As the conceptualiser, ambassador and player of CSPL, I'm looking forward to wearing several hats," Advani said.

Embassy Group will be the title sponsor of the inaugural edition, and Audi acts a co-sponsor.

Matches will be telecast live on the Club Liv app.

Deepanshu and Rohan make it a 1-2 in javelin

ATHLETICS

Sports Bureau

Deepanshu Sharma and Rohan Yadav brought a gold and silver in the men's javelin throw at the Asian under-20 athletics championships in Dubai on Wednesday. While Deepanshu threw a distance of 70.29m, his Uttar Pradesh State-mate Rohan had a best of 70.03m.

Priyanshu, also from UP, came close to winning another gold in the men's 1500m, but he was beaten at the finish by Qatar's Aitoulghazi. His silver came with a time of 3:50.85s.

India won another silver, through Ritik (52.23m) in the men's discus throw

Meanwhile Prachi Ankush Devkar finished fourth in the women's 3000m while Laxita Vinod Sandliea and Tanvi Malik progressed to the women's 800m final after the heats.

Podium finish: Deepanshu, right, and Rohan after their excellent show in men's javelin throw. X@AFIINDIA

Anushka Dattatray Kumbhar and Sai Sangeetha Dodla also entered the medal round in the women's 400m and while male quartermiler Aman Choudhary also made the final.

Strangely, Aman had been named only in the 4x400m relay in the Indian team list announced on Tuesday.

Bapi Hansda, the country's fastest junior this year, and P. Abiram who were supposed to run the individual 400m did not figure in the startlist. According to sources, Hansda could not travel with the team because of passport issues and efforts are being made to ensure that he reaches Dubai at least for the 4x400m relay.

Adille Sumariwalla, the AFI president who is currently in Dubai, and chief junior national coach N. Ramesh could not be contacted for their version on the Hansda issue.

Balaji and Begemann in doubles quarterfinals

TENNIS

Sports Bureau

Sriram Balaji and Andre Begemann beat Nikola Gacic and Bart Stevens 6-3, 6-4 in the doubles pre-quarterfinals of the €74,825 Challenger tennis tournament in Rome, Italy, on Wednesday.

The results: €74,825 Challenger, Rome: Doubles: Pre-quarterfinals: Sriram Balaji & Andre Begemann bt Nikola Cacic & Bart Stevens 6-3, 6-4.

$25,000 ITF men, Santa Margherita di Pula, Italy: Pre-quarterfinals: Andrea Picchione bt Manas Dhamne 7-5, 6-0.

$15,000 ITF, Shymkent, Kazakhstan: Men: Pre-quarterfinals: Vladyslav Orlov bt Chirag Duhan 6-4, 6-2; Maxim Shin bt Yuvan Nandal 6-2, 6-2; Dev Javia bt Grigoriy Lomakin 4-6, 6-3, 6-4; Aryan Shah bt Sergey Fomin 7-5, 6-0.

Doubles: Pre-quarterfinals: Chirag & Karan Singh bt Yuvan & Manish Sureshkumar 5-7, 6-4, [10-6]; S.D. Prajwal Dev & Sai Karteek Reddy bt Savely Ivanov & Dmitri Vasilev 6-0, 6-1.

Women: First round: Ariana Gogulina bt Saumya Vig 6-4, 1-6, 6-2; Soha Sadiq bt Ashmitha Easwaramurthi 4-0 (retired).

Doubles: Pre-quarterfinals: Gozal Ainitdinova & Zhanel Rustemova bt Ashmitha Easwaramurthi & Elina Nepliy 6-1, 2-6, [10-4].

$100,000 ITF women, Tokyo: Doubles: Pre-quarterfinals: Arianne Hartono & Prarthana Thombare bt Rebecca Marino & Carol Zhao 2-6, 6-3, [10-4].

$60,000 ITF women, Charlottesville, USA: Doubles: Pre-quarterfinals: Elvina Kalieva & Ann Li bt Kateryna Volodko & Sahaja Yamalapalli 7-6(3), 5-7, [10-6].

$40,000 ITF women, Lopota, Georgia: Doubles: Quarterfinals: Ekaterine Gorgodze & Ankita Raina bt Aglaya Fedorova & Kira Pavlova 6-2, 5-7, [10-7].

$40,000 ITF women, Wuning, China: First round: Rutuja Bhosale bt Zhu Chenting (Chn) 6-0, 6-2.

$15,000 ITF women, Monastir: Doubles: Pre-quarterfinals: Vaishnavi Adkar & Lamis Aziz bt Wang Shuoran & Zhang Jin 6-3, 6-4; Diva Bhatia & Zeel Desai bt Britney Chiu & Eliessa Vanlangendonck 7-5, 6-3.

Arsenal steamrollers Chelsea, extends lead

Two-goal star: Havertz scores Arsenal's third. REUTERS

PREMIER LEAGUE

Reuters
LONDON

Ruthless Arsenal threw down the gauntlet in the Premier League title race with a 5-0 thrashing of London rival Chelsea to roar three points clear at the top of the table on Tuesday.

Any remaining doubts about Arsenal's staying power were answered emphatically as Leandro Trossard gave them an early lead before Ben White and Kai Havertz scored two each in a dazzling spell after the break to sweep aside a dazed Chelsea.

Arsenal has 77 points from 34 games with Liverpool, who were to face Everton on Wednesday, on 74 from 33.

Champion Manchester City has 73 points with two games in hand starting with a trip to Brighton and Hove Albion on Thursday.

The result: Arsenal 5 (Trossard 4, White 52, 70, Havertz 57, 65) bt Chelsea 0.

BENGALURU ROUND-UP

Shubodaya-Rush FC match ends in stalemate

Shubodaya and Rush FC played out a 1-1 draw in a KSFA 'C' division men's football league match.

The results: Young Dream Soccer Club 4 (Sathesh 30, Deepak 38, Ravibabu 45, Arun 51) bt RV FC 0; Shubodaya 1 (Kishore 44) drew with Rush FC 1 (Arjun 2); Freelancers bt Rare Dare FC (walkover).

Chirag excels in PESCA's win

Chirag Harsha scored 93 to help PESCA defeat DJCA by 41 runs in the Tiger Cup under-16 cricket tournament here.

The scores: Six CA 152/6 in 30 overs (Dhruv Krishnan 50, Udgeet Nandan 49) bt CBT 148 in 28.4 overs (Sharvesh 27); PESCA 211/5 in 30 overs (Chirag Harsha 93) bt DJCA 170 all out in 29.4 overs (Sharan Manikantan 44, Abhinav Nag 3/27, K. Adhrit 3/32).

RXCA 220/4 in 30 overs (Vismay Raj 86, Rathin Sanjay 68) bt DJCA 110/9 in 30 overs (Milan Dhami 3/8); Gopalan 150/9 in 30 overs (B.R. Rathan 3/22) lost to Young Lions 151/6 in 29.3 overs (Karan Raghavendra 71, Kush Kumar 3/29).